

Piet Mondrian: his life's work and evolution 1872 to 1944.

An investigation into the relationships between his theories and his practice as an artist.

Volume one, text, bibliography.

Volume two, illustrations, graphs, diagrams and notes.

Doctor of Philosophy.

The University of Warwick.

The Department of the History of Art.

January 1978.



Piet Mondrian: his lifes work and evolution: 1872-1944.

Contents.

Pp 1-34. Chapter 1. Introduction: a consideration of Mondrian's  
essay 'Plastic art and pure plastic art'.

Sub chapters.

Pp 2-4	1. A general outline of the essay's content.
4-9	2. Mondrian's analytic method.
9-20	3. The development of Mondrian's universal consciousness.
20-25	4. A problem considered and Mondrian's expression of the plastic laws.
26-30	5. A defence of Neo Plastic Art and its role in society.
30-32	6. The complexity of Mondrian's work and the task of this study.
33-34	Footnotes.

Pp 35-64 Chapter 2. Piet Mondrian's life and work, a  
biographical outline.

Sub chapters.

Pp 36-41	1. Mondrian's early life and family years.
41-43	2. Mondrian's evolution, an analytic structure.
43-61	3. The evolutionary connections of Mondrian's final works
61-63	4. Questions arising out of the considered evolution and his New York essays.
64	Footnotes.



### III

Pp 64-84 Chapter 3. The early years, 1888-1892.

Sub chapters.

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 66-68 | 1. The precedents of Mondrian's pre-academy work.   |
| 68-71 | 2. An outline of seventeenth century Dutch Art and the climate of those times.                                |
| 71-74 | 3. The founding of the Barbizon School of painting and it's influence upon Dutch nineteenth century painting. |
| 74-76 | 4. The Hague School of painting and its importance to Mondrian's evolution.                                   |
| 77-79 | 5. Mondrian enters the Academy of Fine Art, Amsterdam.  |
| 79-82 | 6. The reason for the use of statistical and computer graphs in this study.                                   |
| 83-84 | Footnotes.  |

Pp 85-122 Chapter 4. Mondrian at the Rijks Academie and his period of Landscape painting, 1892-1908.

Sub chapters.

- |         |   |
|---------|---|
| 86-88   | 1. Mondrian's years of academic studentship, 1892-96.   |
| 88-95   | 2. Mondrian's post academy period and the beginnings of his experiments with Symbolism, 1896-1903.                                      |
| 95-97   | 3. Mondrian's year of painting along, the rivers Gein and Amstel.   |
| 97-104  | 4. Mondrian's first visit to Brabant and his sojourn in Uden, Brabant, 1904-1905.   |
| 104-109 | 5. Mondrian's return to Amsterdam in 1905, his landscape painting drawn from subjects to the south of Amsterdam including Duivendrecht. |
| 109-114 | 6. Mondrian's development of 'Nocturn', paintings of landscape, 1905-1906.  |

#### IV

114-118	7.	Mondrian's second period of painting along the Gein, 1906-1907.
118-120	8.	Mondrian's concentration upon Symbolis experiments, the crisis of Theosophy, 1908.
121-122		Footnotes.
Pp 123-168	Chapter 5.	The years in which Mondrian's transition began, 1908-1911.
	Sub chapters.	
124-128	1.	'Woods near Oele', and the European artistic climate.
128-135	2.	The influence of Jan Toorop and the impact of Post Impressionist painting.
135-137	3.	The impact of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne.
137-143	4.	Mondrian's evolution through the 'Genesis of Modernism' and the Amsterdam mileu.
143-164	5.	Mondrian's activities at Domburg and other landscape paintings. The influence of and experiments with Post Impressionist colour and symbolist theories, 1908-1911.
164-166	6.	The two sides of Mondrian's experiments with symbolism.
167-168		Footnotes.
Pp 169-239	Chapter 6.	Mondrian and Cubism.
	Subchapters	
170-173	1.	The Amsterdam mileu, 1911-1912.
173-181	2.	Mondrian's first experiments with Cubism.
181-186	3.	The influence of Cubism.
186-205	4.	The influ-nce and impact of Picasso and the Parisian Cubis, 1911-1914.

205-216	5.	Towards Post-Cubist abstraction and Neo-Plasticism.
216-218	6.	The development of criticism of Mondrian's work in the Netherlands, 1914-1917.
219-230	7.	Mondrian's return from Paris to the Netherlands, Post-Cubist experiments, the direct basis for Neo Plastic painting, 1914-1917.
230-234	8.	Mondrian and the Amsterdam milieu during the First World War. His first meetings with Bart van der Leek and Theo van Doesburg, 1916-1917.
235-239		Footnotes.
Pp 240-269		Chapter 7. The critical years: Mondrian's transition from Post-Cubist Abstraction into Neo Plasticism. 1917-1918/19.
		Sub chapters.
241-242	1.	The break with Cubist Abstraction, 1914-1916.
242-247	2.	Post Cubist Abstraction and the influence of Bart van der Leek, 1916-1917.
247-260	3.	Neo Plasticism is born, Mondrian returns to Paris, 1918-1919.
260-261	4.	Mondrian and the development of framing.
261-265	5.	Mondrian and Dr. M.H.J. Schoenmaekers' definitions of the 'plastic', against empty formalism.
265-267	6.	Neo Plasticism developed, 1919-1922.
268-269		Footnotes.
Pp 270-331		Chapter 8. Mondrian's theoretical development and philosophic contribution to De Stijl.
		Sub chapters
271-274	1.	Mondrian's first written theoretical statements,



## VI

274-275	2. Colour symbolism and Mondrian's relationship to it's history.
275-277	3. The beginnings of Mondrian's divergence from the mainstream of the Avant Garde, 1912-1914.
277-281	4. The philosophic content of the 'Two Sketch Books', 1912-1914.
281-282	5. Mondrian and Bart van der Leek; fundamental differences.
282-284	6. Mondrian's connection with the traditions of philosophic thought established by Plato and other Greek philosophers.
284-293	7. The founding of De Stijl, 1917.
293-306	8. The influence of Dr. M.H.J. Schoenmaeker upon Mondrian and upon the basic premises which formed the foundations of De Stijl.
306-319	9. Mondrian's theoretical contribution to the first editions of De Stijl, 1917-1920.
319-325	10. Mondrian's resignation from the De Stijl Group in 1925.
326-331	Footnotes.
Pp 332-355	Chapter 9. Conclusion. Subchapters.
333-336	1. Mondrian's self consciousness and the embodiment of cosmic order.
337-340	2. Mondrian's lifelong involvement with fundamental Theosophy.
340-342	3. Mondrian's paintings from the mid-twenties to the mid-nineteen thirties.
342-343	4. Neo Plastic proportions and music.

## VII

- 344-351      5. The influence of Mondrian both direct and indirect.
- 351-353      6. Evolution and the relationship between the theory and practice in Piet Mondrian's work.
- 354-355      Footnotes.

Pp 356-363      Chronological outlines.

Pp 364-386      Bibliography.

365-367      Section 1. Piet Mondrian's writings used in this study.

368-371      Section 2. Other De Stijl artists writings and closely related texts to Mondrian's writings.

372-382      Section 3. Reference sources, books and articles, relating directly to Mondrian's work with additional indirectly related books and essays.

383-384      Section 4. Philosophic and Theosophic sources used in direct connection with this study.

385-386      Section 5. Sources used as a background to this study, to establish a foundation and a general context.

### Volume two.

Pp 1-8. Titles of illustrations.

9. Map of the Netherlands showing important geographic locations of Mondrian's early years as an artists.

10. Graph number one.

11. Graph number two.

12-93. Illustrations.

94-109. List of diagrams and notes.

110-147. Diagrams.

## Preface.

Piet Mondrian in his essays, the majority of which were published in De Stijl, stressed the importance of a conscious understanding of the concept of evolution, both as a conception of man's spiritual and biological evolution. This study of his life's work examines the development of his ever growing cognizance of this concept as a 'unity in duality', and in addition his awareness of the implications of this conception.

The consideration of Mondrian's life's work from the premises set by a study involved with the evolutionary nature of his work has brought into sharp focus the dialectical relationship that his latter work has to his earlier work. But in addition research conducted for this study has shown that the entirety of Mondrian's work does not exist as an isolated individual incident but as a consciously, thus dialectically related part of the History of Philosophy of Art.

The methods used in the course of this study were developed from the implications of the original premises 'to consider the relationships between Mondrian's theories and practice'. To begin with, a basic philosophic background was established against which Mondrian's theories could be studied. This was followed by a careful study of his early work against the background of 19th century European Art and the theories that influenced the art of that period. A form of 'bibliography', was constructed which embraced both paintings and literature with which Mondrian could have concerned himself and been influenced by. For example, the collection of paintings in the Mesdag Museum and Dr. Schoenmaekers two books.



The problem of visualizing Mondrian's life as an evolutionary process became an early and difficult question. It was resolved through the construction of two statistical graphs, the second of which was drawn with the aid of a computer.

At every stage of the close study of individual works, made by Mondrian and other artists, whose work was used for comparative purposes, analytic diagrams were constructed. They have proved themselves to be invaluable in gaining a clarification and cognizance of the evolution of Mondrian's concept of 'unity in duality', in his visual work.

The major divisions of this study are concerned with the stylistic and theoretical changes that make up the parts of Mondrian's transition from an art based in the perceptual cognizance and expression of reality to the conscious manifestation of an art that was in its essential form rooted in a pure conception of reality. In realizing this form of art Mondrian also found answers to the ontological questions that had beset him in his early years and had consequently acted as a powerful motivating force to his artistic evolution.

The conclusions drawn from this study of Mondrian's life's work are that his work in all its manifold aspects was, throughout his life an ever evolving expression of man's desire to understand and to manifest his understanding of the universe and as such his work was in complete concordance with his theories.

## Abbreviations.

Published, pb.

Translated, tr.

First published, fpb.

Re-published, rpb.

Re-printed, rp.

Introduction, intro.

Haags Gemeente Museum, Gemeente Museum.

## Declaration.

This thesis has been researched and written during some of the years that I have been engaged in full time teaching. Some of the ideas contained in it have inevitably been used in Lectures and Seminars, but only a small amount of the factual material has been so used.

## Acknowledgements.

To all the people who have helped and given me encouragement during the period that this study has taken I should like to take this opportunity to express my thanks. Especially I should like to acknowledge the continuing patience and encouragement that I have received from my wife and daughter.

I am indebted to Dr. D.C. Barrett. S.J, Reader in Philosophy in the Dept of Philosophy at Warwick University, for his untiring supervision. To Prof. Julian Gardner of the Dept of the History of Art for the care he has given to the reading of the text. To Enno Develing, Sec. to the Gemeentelijke Commissie voor Beeldende Kunsten, The Hague, for his invaluable practical help and continual encouragement throughout the entire duration of this project.

My thanks are also extended to Herbert Henkels and Marietta Jitta of the Haags Gemeente Museum who made my researches in that Museum so trouble free and who provided an important 'sounding board', for the testing of information gathered.

To Prof. Harry Holtzman of Conn. U.S.A. I extend my thanks for the permission that he gave me to use his archive of Mondrian documents. Also I would like to thank Prof. Dr. H.L.C. Jaffé of Amsterdam University and Joop Joostens of the Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam for the time and interest that they gave to discussing my researches.

My sister in law, Anna Sholl, provided invaluable assistance with the correction of the text and its typing. Mevrouw Drost-Felix and her daughter gave me invaluable help with the precise translation of Mondrian's letters. To Ron Johnson of Lanchester Polytechnic my thanks for supervising the progress of the computer programme used for drawing the 'evolutionary graph'.



I am also indebted to R. Plummer for his initial help with this project and to the Research Committee at Lanchester Polytechnic for financial assistance. Lastly I should like to thank all those people in Libraries, Archives and Museums who have given me assistance.

Chapter 1. Introduction: A consideration of Mondrian's essay  
'Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art'.

- Subchapters:
- (1) A general outline of the essay's content.
  - (2) Mondrian's analytic method.
  - (3) The development of Mondrian's universal consciousness.
  - (4) A problem considered, and his expression of the plastic laws.
  - (5) A defence of Neo plastic art and its role in society.
  - (6) The complexity of Mondrian's work and the task of this study.
  - (7). Footnotes.

## Chapter 1

(1) In order to gain an understanding of Piet Mondrian's work and ideas it is instructive to commence by considering his essay 'Plastic art and pure plastic art', for it is representative of his mature thought. It was published in 1937 in the book 'Circle',<sup>(1)</sup> and Mondrian set down in it a concise, if complex, statement detailing his own development as an artist and as an art theoretician. This introduction will concern itself with the ideas contained in the essay and indirectly with his life's practical and theoretical work. Within the essay can be found references to the following list of concepts. A theory of tradition, concepts of evolution as a universal process. These were no doubt stimulated by the intellectual climate in which Mondrian found himself during his transitional years<sup>(2)</sup>. It also contains Neo Platonic ideas of essence and universality, which are interwoven with theories concerning the role of objectivity and subjectivity, through which Mondrian had constructed his concept of dualism, a concept which would result in artistic and spiritual purification. He also expressed reasons for the need of purification relating them to a Utopian ideal society. In addition to all the above ideas he set down his ideas concerning the action of perception and conception, which is closely coupled with his most important concept regarding the role of intuition. Throughout the essay personalised inferences relating to Calvinism and to Theosophy can be found. The effect of these influences is to give to his Utopian Idealism a flavour of determinism. This quality exists in Mondrian's concept of both the evolution of art and of humanity.



It is, in relation to Mondrian, inappropriate to draw a distinction between his two activities of (a) painting, and, (b) theory. For initially it is out of (a) that (b) grew, later they became mutually interactive.

In this essay the changes that he underwent and the concepts formed by these changes are all outlined or inferred. In part the essay's content is centered upon Mondrian's general notions of the history and evolutionary process of art, its other general content is concerned with the verbal expression of Mondrian's own personal development. His style of expression employs a depersonalised form of writing, although the subject is really biographical. This two part approach leads to two separate points. The first being Mondrian's obvious and objective awareness of the evolution of his art and the second point is that his own subjectivity was not overridden by his objectivity when he asserted and postulated his ideas in these general terms.

The essay concludes with Mondrian's thoughts and beliefs on the direction in which art should progress. The beliefs are not specifically related to painting alone but to the broadest meaning of art. He stated his views of direction in these terms.

Painting and sculpture will not manifest, themselves, as separate objects nor as mural art which destroys architecture itself, nor as applied art, but being purely constructive will aid the creation of an atmosphere not merely utilitarian or rational but also pure and complete in its beauty.

This statement is taken from the final paragraph of the essay. It not only states Mondrian's ideal hopes for the future, it also gives a concise summary of the ideals of all the artists and architects who contributed to, 'Circle'. What they aimed at was an environmental dream. The dream was concerned, as Mondrian stated

in the above paragraph, with the integration, into an indivisible whole, of painting, sculpture, architecture and other allied arts.

This ideal concept of the complete integration of the arts, formulated by Mondrian in this essay, was not based upon a revivalist approach to the problem, such as is epitomised by the Neo Gothic revival of the nineteenth century. In fact any form of revivalist theory was incompatible with Mondrian's theory of progress and tradition. His theory of tradition is one of the first major factors that needs to be taken into account in this essay. For he asserted that according to his theory of tradition and progress it was logical for abstract art to have evolved out of figurative art. He made this assertion through his analysis of figurative art and concluded that the real sense of beauty inherent in a work of art could not be realised through the specific forms of mimetic projection, but only through dynamic relationships. This was essentially the conclusion of his own analysis, which concerned itself with both the progress of art in general and his own art in particular. This theory forms the basis of his revisionist approach to all artistic activities.

(2) His analytic method, intuitively formulated, was to break into parts the tradition of painting and then to distil out of those parts that which philosophers as far back as Plato have called 'the substance of art'. This procedure of distillation immediately raises problems of the metaphysical nature of Mondrian's theories and the realisation of these theories through his paintings. If this process of distillation, in which he was involved, was analogous with the metaphysical nature of some philosophers' thought, either by design or by accident, then these



analogous relationships need to be considered. To phrase this point in another way, Mondrian in his essay adhered to the idea that the past is part of the present and it is therefore the role of the artist to analyse what it is that the past brings to the present. Having decided upon this, it is necessary to consider whether or not it, the influence of the past, has a complete relative truth value to the present and if not, what parts of it do apply to the relative point in time in which the artist is making his analysis. Not only are parts which are identifiable as truth components analysed in the essay, Mondrian also demonstrated that the past brings to the present methods by which these truths could be identified. This process is termed by Mondrian 'the evolution of art' and in recognising this process he verbalised his own evolution in general terms. The process, he believed, resulted in 'intensification', and not in 'expansion', and by being so it would lead, rationally, to an 'evolution of the individual towards the universal, of the subjective towards the essence of things and ourselves'.

Mondrian's use of the term essence immediately relates the ideas of art that he propounded to some of the principles of metaphysics. The process by which these 'forms', the metaphysical ideas could be realised was, Mondrian said, through a procedure of intensification, the procedure of abstract art.

Mondrian in this essay states categorically his opposition to expansionist procedures in art. His historical analysis of art had led to his belief that art had become static in relying on the expansionist procedure of mimetic projection. Intensification on

the other hand had been the procedure by which Mondrian had discovered what the past had brought into his present. He continued, in the essay, to assert that the so-called progress of mimetic art had not in fact been progress or evolution at all, but had only been the extension of ideas relating to singular objects. He qualified these criticisms by saying that figurative art not only resulted in subjectivity but was also the result of subjectivity. By asserting his ideas concerning the ramifications of, 'subjective inclinations', in art, Mondrian further expressed his belief in the need for a, 'universal art', for he believed that subjectivity, being based upon egocentric and base emotions, could not result in, nor was a part of universality as he understood it. Rather subjectivity and thus expansion resulted in the stagnation of art and by implication of life. The evolutionary process of intensification Mondrian equated with a procedure of purification, for not only did he conceive of this process as being the evolutionary process of art. He believed that by purifying art, the artist was acting out his role as pioneer and that it was through the work of the pioneers and their subsequent influence that mankind would be aided in their struggle towards spiritual purification, understood and believed by Mondrian to be the ultimate goal. Consequently he formulated his idea of the place of the artist in society, as mentioned above, that of a pioneer. This inner need for spiritual purification, as expressed by Mondrian, is analogous to the deterministic tenets of Calvinism and also it bears a close relation to the ideas of Theosophy especially in terms of man's evolution towards the spiritual existence. In terms of Theosophy man's need



to strive would lead him through a number of stages, to the point of spiritual purification, the fourth plane. Mondrian's understanding of this process of evolutionary purification was that it would lead to a balance between the subjective and the objective, a balance of opposites. Mondrian's concept, although obviously related to both Calvinism and Theosophy, is really his own interpretation of evolutionary concepts. It is not revamped Calvinism or Theosophic doctrine, both of which he reacted against for varying reasons at different times during his life. He expressed these ideas in for example the following quotation:

In removing completely from the work all objects, the world is not separated from the spirit but is on the contrary, put into a balanced opposition with the spirit since the one and the other are purified. This creates a perfect unity between the two opposites. (3)

Mondrian took up, consciously in Calvinistic terms, or Theosophic terms, the role of spiritual leader. In either instance he recognised himself as being a teacher of what he believed and thought to be determined truths. There is another simple analogy that can be drawn with Calvinism. It is expressed in the above passage and concerns the removal of objects from work; objects being singular forms. The removal of these would release the spirit from its subjective bonds, thereby allowing for a balance to evolve. Anyone who has visited a Dutch Reform Calvinist Church will have noticed the complete absence of religious ornaments. Quite obviously the banishment of such objects, or trivia, was to enable the spirit to transcend its earthly subjective bonds whilst in God's house. If this analogy with Calvinism is correct it is unsurprising, for Mondrian grew up a strict Calvinist under his father's authoritative parentalism.<sup>(4)</sup> Later he rejected the church of his father, but the question, raised by the ideas outlined above, is obviously did he reject the ideas and deterministic

concepts of Calvinism? In elucidating further his notion of the purification of art through the removal of objects, Mondrian set down in this essay a critical view of both Cubism and Surrealism. It should be remembered that Mondrian worked for about two years in what can strictly be called the Cubist style. His contribution was the introduction of two dimensionality, and a use of a range of colour that is not usually associated with the 'Appolinaire Cubists'.

In this essay, now under consideration, Mondrian set down his criticism of Cubism, which was based entirely upon the continuing use by the Cubists of referential, therefore singular objects. In fact there are certain political reasons for the Cubist use of referential objects. These reasons can be traced back to the socialist theories of members of the Barbizon school, such men as Courbet and his involvement with the revolution in 1870. Mondrian did not criticise these socialist tenets as such, his criticism was voiced against the formal use of referential objects. The second twentieth century movement of art that Mondrian criticised in his essay was Surrealism. Whilst he worked and made a valuable contribution to Cubism he never attempted a Surrealist painting of any categorizable type. He attacked Surrealism for its use of literary source material and also for its use of, what he understood as, the base elements of human inclinations. His criticism of Surrealism stated that because of its use of the base elements of human inclinations and instincts coupled together with the unconscious, the resulting activity could only be of an individualised creative type. Therefore Surrealism could not contribute to the evolution of a universal spirituality and beauty, or in other words, to Mondrian's conception of the evolution of art. He was by criticising



these two movements, also implying that in his experience and from his standpoint, they had come about through an uncritical subjective view of the history of art.

The criticism that Mondrian launched against Cubism and Surrealism in this essay brings into being another analogy with Calvinism. It is that of the 'vivification of the spirit and eventual salvation'. He was in addition to criticising, positing, once again, the rules of Neo plasticism. Rules, that like the tenets of Calvinism, were meant to reveal art in the spiritual but concealed form that he believed it had always possessed. This form, this essence of art, he believed had been hidden under the veil of subjectivism and earthbound referential objects. He believed that Neo plasticism would once again bring forth the spiritual nature of art and consequently it would have a moral effect upon mankind.

What Calvinism and Neo plasticism have in common, and this is part of the importance of Mondrian's theory of tradition, is that neither Mondrian nor Calvin believed that they were (a) founding a new church, (b) founding a new art, both men believed that they were reforming and returning their 'concerns' to their pristine condition and by so doing they would release the human spirit from its earthly bondage and subjectivism. They were both revisionist in the best sense of the word.

(3) Within Mondrian's concepts of the theory of tradition can be found a number of major themes. His essay, can, if considered from one point of view only, be interpreted as pertaining to his conception of the theory of tradition in art. But as has been pointed out already in the above analogies, the essay and Mondrian's concepts set down in it should be related and evaluated against a

concept of the total theory of tradition and its evolution. Mondrian believed in an interaction between all aspects of life. An interaction of parts between which no clear distinctions could be drawn, except for the purposes of analytical study, for it was through analysis that Mondrian was able to increase his knowledge of life and the world. Another major theme that is present in the essay is Mondrian's personal rediscovery and subsequent re-establishment of the universal principles of beauty, without these principles, he contended art could not exist.

What needs here to be said and it continues to clarify the idea of Mondrian's work as an evolutionary process, is that a great deal of the information contained in this essay refers directly or by implication back through both the history of art and of philosophy, to the development of thought propounded by Greek philosophers. For Plato asserted that universals do exist, he held them in great reverence and called them the 'forms'<sup>(5)</sup>. These, Plato argued, do exist, for example, he stated that 'goodness stands apart from and is more perfect than any of its manifestations on earth'. The way in which these ideas came to Mondrian is through the influence of Theosophy and the interaction of thoughts and ideas discussed in his conversations with Theo van Doesburg, between 1915 and 1917. The Theosophic influence upon his thinking and especially upon the subject of universals can be seen in the written text of 'the two sketchbooks'. Plato's ideas can also be closely associated with Mondrian's rejection of particulars - Plato taught that particulars are too shifting and changeable to be objects of precise knowledge and this being the case Plato went on to assert that precise knowledge must therefore be concerned with universals. Plato related his concept of universals and universality to all of his philosophic



thought. It should be remembered that the term philosopher was an all-embracing term that included that which we now call science. The question of the nature of universals has continued since the time of Plato and it is reasonable that it should have confronted Mondrian in the development of his theoretical stance. The universal interests of Mondrian have been briefly traced back to Plato, but it is most likely that his interest in their possible existence was first stimulated by his practical work as a painter and then through his interest in Theosophy with its Neo Platonic content. These influences assisted Mondrian in gaining an understanding of the nature of the intuitive ideas that arose through his work. The time or dates from which Mondrian was influenced by Theosophy is a disputed point. He is known to have joined the society in 1909, but Michel Seuphor asked his youngest brother about this point whilst he was conducting research for his book on Mondrian in Holland. The brother answered Seuphor that as students living in Amsterdam during the mid- and late- 1890's they discussed Theosophy, which at that time formed a strong part of the dialogue of the intellectual milieu at Amsterdam.

As has been suggested previously, the problem of what constitutes a universal is one that has beset thinkers in many ages. There are two general ways in which the universals that Mondrian re-established can be considered. The first is that set of universals which Mondrian stated were the universals of painting. These simply stated have to do with the structure, form, colour and order of the evolution of painting. Having found them, he interpreted them into the rules of Neo plasticism, which, by implication of all art, surely means that all art must be Neo plastic. For it could not be art if it did not adhere to the rules, rules derived

from the universals. Mondrian also stated that the rules of art have no content, are irrelevant, if they are not coupled with the second class of his universals, the transcendental universals.

The first of these classes of universals, which subsequently became the rules of Neo plasticism, arose out of Mondrian's analysis of what physically constituted a painting and consequently what should constitute every other art form. The second class arose out of his personal search for a concept of reality, a position of interaction and harmony between intuition, perception, instinct and intellect. The positing of these universals meant that Mondrian, had in his view, stripped away all the trappings of art thus allowing it to manifest itself in its pure form. Secondly he had achieved - again in his view, which was constructed from intuition and from intellectual consideration, his own understanding of reality. The construction of these two classes of universal concepts meant that he had developed the conceptual framework through which his art could be expressed in Pure Plastic terms. A number of problems arise out of these assertions and by way of introduction they are raised here, for he stated these universals in such a categorical manner that the possibility of another form of art is excluded. This is in itself not entirely compatible with the theory of the traditions of art from which they had been distilled. But this class of universals is compatible with his theory of evolution and of course with the tenets of Calvinism.

For example - a point previously mentioned - he dismissed Cubism. Due to its procedure of abstracting from the outward appearance of singular objects and for retaining perceptible singular information in the resulting construct. This, Mondrian said, was only a part of reality the shifting part was given emphasis and therefore no balanced opposition based on universal principles,



could be achieved. He dismissed Surrealism for its emphasis on the subconscious, he termed this emphasis 'memories of the womb' and Pure Plastic Art could not spring from such memories. It could only spring from pure intuition and secondly from the intellect. He equated the subconscious with the innate senses.

In developing his second class of universals Mondrian studied, as mentioned above, the work of the Theosophists, some of whom lived in Amsterdam during the early part of the twentieth century. The sort of thought associated with Theosophy was a great influence in the whole of the cultural life in and around Amsterdam during this period. It is a well documented fact that until the end of his life Mondrian had with him a number of books, written by Krishnamurti<sup>(6)</sup>, Rudolf Steiner and Dr. Schoenmaekers. Earlier he had read works by Madame Blavatsky. The teaching of the tradition of Theosophy claimed a deep intuitive insight into the 'divine nature and constituent moments of processes. Sometimes this insight is claimed as the result of the operation of some higher faculty or some supernatural revelation to the individual.' One of the elemental claims of the theory of Theosophy is that it claims to gain knowledge through intuition and by so doing it has no prime reliance on logical reason or the results of empirical observation. Some aspects of Theosophy have a closer relation to Indian Mysticism than to occidental thought, for India and the mystics were believed to be the fountain of knowledge and that the only possible knowledge was intuitive knowledge because this sort of knowledge must be pure.

Indian mystics do not though accept the traditional occidental concept of dualism which is one of the central themes of Mondrian's theoretical framework. It is becoming increasingly clear that Mondrian's association with Theosophy was not in any true sense a

religious involvement but that it was more one of using Theosophy as a testing board, a clarifying agent, for his ideas and his evolution towards Pure Plastic Art. It would have been impossible for Mondrian to have denied the empirical results of his 'tekeningen'. Therefore he had to accept the dualistic interaction of the physical and the spiritual, to have accepted the tenets of Monism would have been incompatible with his own art and his theory of tradition.

He stated in his contribution to 'circle' that 'the only problem of art is to achieve a balance between the objective and subjective'. This statement asserted an attitude that is not only of a transcendental nature, but also recognises a necessity for a balance, a harmony between the ordinary world and the spiritual world, in fact Mondrian asserted that 'true reality' cannot exist unless these two elements are in balance. And thereby he inferred that the monistic tenets that can be found in Theosophy do not lead to an understanding of reality. In making this point, with its inherent criticism, Mondrian expressed an alternative that was couched in deterministic ideology. He either did not realise this or he actually thought it to be the only possible course. Which is peculiar, for in relation to his life, determinism had at the time or writing the article an upsetting effect. He had firstly reacted against his father's deterministic paternal authority, secondly he had reacted against the Theosophic principles of Neo Platonic determinism, and thirdly he was in 1937 considering flight from Paris in fear of Hitler. His stance, taken in this essay, when viewed in terms of a logical development of his deterministic ideas could lead to the same general forms of human degradation that he had reacted against and was about to flee from.



It will have already been noted even in these few paragraphs that considerable emphasis, in the analysis of this essay, has been given to philosophy and the traditions of thought. The reason for this is that Mondrian's work understood as an evolutionary process possesses some analogous relationships to concepts of reality propounded by many philosophers and thought processes that enabled them to construct their propositions of reality.

This thesis relates both to (a) Mondrian's practical work, and (b) to his theoretical development. It must be stressed that (b) evolved out of the influences of (a), and secondly that (b) evolved out of the thought matrices of the early part of his life as an artist in Holland. The aim of this study is not though to attempt to prove that Mondrian was a metaphysical philosopher, for this would be counter to his whole life, which he dedicated to the development of art. The relationship of his work to philosophy is based on the nature of the inquiries that his work and the work of philosophers deals with.

As noted previously, Mondrian stated a necessity for a balance between the subjective and the objective. This has been a traditional aim of occidental thought, both religious and philosophic. Mondrian's theory of dualism can be understood as containing synthetic essence, for he said that the two should be in a balanced opposition, this is surely an instance of thesis and antithesis, with the balance forming the synthesis, thus creating the classic dialectic triad.

Throughout his theoretical writing, one aspect of Mondrian's thought was given great emphasis, being his idea of a synthesis between the activity of thought and the activity of painting. The emphasis on this aspect was motivated by the aims of his life's work, which was to carry out a revision of painting and thereby of

art, to release art from the confines of subjectivity, epitomised by figuration and literary content and to restate art in its pristine state whereby all men could recognise the universal beauty of art, and thus of life. To achieve this aim he formulated and set down a number of universal rules. It was previously mentioned that Mondrian believed that these rules had been constituent parts of painting at all times, but they had been employed in the depiction of singular objects and by being used in this manner they had become disguised and distorted. The overwhelming importance of the relationship between forms had been lost. The problem of relationships between forms Mondrian decided was the most significant and fundamental problem of composition. Relationships of form held universal value. Having clarified the issue he was able to relate his development of relation form usage to figurative art out of which he claimed the problem of relationship of form had arisen. Its evolution had been for Mondrian through a dialectical process, rather than through a direct process of influence. As this process evolved, through drawings (tekeningen), paintings and writings, Mondrian fully realised the need for a formal language that employed neutral forms alone. This evolution of the knowledge of necessity of neutral forms can be seen in the '*Two sketchbooks*' which acted as notes for the, 'Pier and ocean' series of paintings. The sketchbooks led to the discovery that if neutral forms were used exclusively, dynamic relationships could be created, and the dynamic formal relationship Mondrian understood as the key to an art of universal values.



Mondrian's evolutionary concept of art was partially stimulated by the influences of Darwinian thinking that abounded in Amsterdam at the turn of the century, this influence actually came to Mondrian through the teachings of Theosophy. But there is one criticism that can be made of his concept of evolution and it is that he did not understand evolution as being change ad infinitum, he understood it as evolving towards a determinable point, a spiritually purified world in which art no longer had any relevance. In accepting this interpretation of evolution Mondrian was able to propound the deterministic rules of Neo plastic art. In contrast, Kandinsky, another artist who was deeply involved with Theosophy for many years, accepted the idea of evolution as continuous infinite change<sup>(7)</sup>.

Mondrian in his analysis of the evolution of art stated that the process had necessitated the use of neutral forms. By this he referred to forms that have no referential value to any given singular object, such as a figure. The most profound neutral forms were, for Mondrian, the geometric forms, for they had evolved through a process of abstraction which had removed from them all traces of singular objects or particular form, they had thus achieved universal formal value. The purity of form, which geometric forms possess, would have to be used in a work of art in order to create 'a mutual interaction of constructive elements and their inherent relationships'. By being related in this way the geometric forms would bring into being 'purified constructive elements thus evolving pure relationships'.

In considering the pitfalls of the use of geometry and even of algebra or other mathematical systems Mondrian set down in this essay - as he did in many other essays - two important interrelated points, points that should have been noted by many artists who have attempted to follow his lead.



Firstly he said:-

- (a) 'Non-figurative art is not purely intellectual.'
- (b) 'Algebraic equations are not art nor is the creation of the equation.'<sup>(8)</sup>

He then went on to say that 'the content of non-figurative art cannot be described', and by implication he was saying that the content of an algebraic equation can be explained. Also in (a) he was drawing attention to the intuitive nature of art, intuition was for Mondrian, at a, 'higher stage' than intellect in the Theosophic evolutionary schema of spiritual transcendence. But in drawing attention to this intuitive aspect he had to make a very fine distinction between his understanding of intellect, instinct, and intuition. His assertion that the role and influence of intuition was paramount placed his work firmly in the framework of the theory of tradition out of which his ideas evolved. For example he said 'non-figurative art does not come from the unconscious it comes from pure intuition which is at the basis of subjective objective dualism'<sup>(9)</sup>. This statement, if read contextually, comes from two sources, firstly and most directly it relates to the concept of intuition propounded in Theosophic thought and ultimately in Indian mysticism. Secondly it has a relationship to Kant's a priori concept of the evolution of knowledge. Mondrian, in recognising his European heritage, maintains the more rational European, therefore Kantian, view of the role of intuition and even the most simple analysis of the development of his knowledge places it in that tradition, as well as that of Theosophy.

But he also stated that Pure Plastic Art does not exclude the influence of external stimulation, nor did he conceive of plastic

most important if an understanding of Mondrian's work in its entirety is to be arrived at - that particular forms do not constitute either neutrality or universality of form. Theosophist influences led Mondrian to say 'that the determinate laws of nature have remained hidden behind the superficial aspects of nature' i.e. particular form.

Mondrian was inferring that figurative art due to its concentration on particular forms had only depicted the superficial aspects of nature and by so doing the whole tradition of figurative art had failed to depict true reality, it had expanded but it had not evolved towards a greater spirituality, which Mondrian believed to be the true aim of art. Plato made a comment that bears a direct relation to Mondrian's view of figurative art. Plato's comment was an attack directed against mimetic art, he considered that mimetic art could not achieve any spiritual values due to its expressive use of particular form and not universal form<sup>(10)</sup>. Mondrian could then be understood as restating Plato's critical attack on figurative art.

(4) Previously some consideration was given to Mondrian's understanding of the role of intuition, and a relationship was formed between his understanding of intuition and with that traditional view of intuition epitomised by Kant. In accepting the influence of external stimulus, Mondrian accepted the influence of perception and thus of empirical solutions. It was in fact impossible for him not to accept the two forces of influence, intuition and empiricism, for if he had rejected the latter he would have refuted his own evolution as an artist, which began primarily as a landscape painter.



In setting down the rules of Pure Plastic Art, Mondrian made what appears to be two incompatible statements. So before examining the rules, as stated, in this essay, it is necessary to examine this incompatibility, for it has a close relationship to the rules. He said:-

- (a) 'The relativity principle rejects fixed laws' Then he went on to say
- (b) 'Art has fixed laws that govern composition and the inherent interrelationships between the law of equivalence creates dynamic equilibrium revealing the true content of reality.'<sup>(11)</sup>

This is a good example of the apparent contradictions that can be found in Mondrian's writings, one point that can be made in attempting to discover a reason for it is that of a possible imbalance in his understanding of the influence of 'pure intuition' i.e. a priori concepts and the influence of empirical stimulants. For in (b) he started by writing about the specific laws of art and concluded by writing about the revelation of true reality. That in itself implies that he considered his art to be capable of revealing the universal laws of nature and thus true reality. But can true reality be expressed in the harmonic interrelationships of Pure Plastic Art? (b) can be analysed in many ways, thus revealing its complexity and if it is also considered in its relationship to (a), then the problem becomes extreme, for the opposite interpretation would also be valid.

One answer that can be given to this apparent problem of the issue between (a) and (b) can be found in the level of meaning in which he used the term. For in (a) he used the term relativity in its broadest most cosmological sense, i.e. in relation to those laws of relativity that govern the movements of the universe. If then



the meaning of (a), its relativity meaning is applied to (b), then what appear to be deterministic principles implied in the meaning of (b) become relativistic principles, that is if they are considered from the cosmological viewpoint.

But if the meaning of (a) and the meaning of (b) are incompatible then (a) must refute (b) and therefore the rules which are directly stated or implied by the meaning of (b) are refuted. But if the meaning of (a) does not refute the meaning of (b), in the sense that (a) is a universal cosmological law, then it can be said that (b) is in its first part ( $b_1$ ) only universal in the sense of art, whilst the second part ( $b_2$ ) relates Mondrian's knowledge to the broader issues of the meaning of (a). Therefore the relative meaning of (b) in its relationship to the meaning of (a) operates on two levels of meaning in one sentence. The reason for the above digression into an (a) and (b) dialogue is to make it clear that Mondrian wrote in a manner that is often very complex, while seeming to be simple. I would also say that his paintings have the same quality of visual simplicity, but contain the same sort of complexities as that which was considered above.

It can be said that the laws of nature that the Theosophist movement claimed to have intuitively discovered are analogous to the rules of art which Mondrian claimed to have revealed. These claims led Mondrian to a belief in the need for the artist to serve mankind. For he stated that it was the task of the artist to help art evolve and if the artist accepted this role he became a pioneer and by taking up this status he had an ethical role to play. He continued to expand this idea by saying that humanity must have pioneers and leaders and this suggests that he did not entirely accept the equality of man in his theoretical stance.

In general they use art as propoganda for collective or personal ideas, such as literature. They are both in favour of the progress of the mass and against the progress of the elite, thus against the logical march of human evolution. Is it really true that the evolution of the mass and that of the elite are incompatible? The elite rises from the mass, is it not therofore its highest expression?

The question he raised was: what should the ethical stance of the pioneer, the elite be? His answer to this question does not though leave room for an equilibrated social ethical stance to be adopted for his answer was couched in deterministic principlos. By answering the question in this way he set up an incompatibility with his own life, for he constantly reacted against such deterministic principles and the logical progression of them.

The universal laws that Mondrian propounded in this essay were as follows:

(1) The law of dynamic equilibrium as opposed to static equilibrium and particular form.

(1) gives rise to other laws which determine the way dynamic equilibrium is to be achieved.

#### 1.1. Position and dimension.

Relation of rectangular position is constant. This gives the work a quality of stability which is destroyed by the law of relations of proportion.

1.2. Art expresses rectangular relationships even if not determinate, by height and width of a work and by its constructive forms and thereby the mutual relation of these forms.

(2) The construction of rhythm of mutual relations - the constructive-destructive quality of dynamic equilibrium.

(Art is not without movement but is on the contrary a continual movement.)



(3) Relation of dimension: these must be varied to avoid repetition.

3.1. Gradually form and line gain tension. For this reason the straight line is a stronger more profound expression of reality than the curve.

3.2. In Pure Plastic Art the significance of different forms and lines is very important; it is precisely this fact which makes it pure.

(4) The law of denaturalisation of matter is of fundamental importance.

4.1. In order that art may be really abstract, so that it should not represent relations with the natural aspect of things and thus lose its universal quality.

4.2. Non-figurative art is created by establishing a dynamic rhythm of determinate mutual relations which exclude the formation of any particular form.

4.3. The execution is of the greatest importance in the work of art, it is largely through this that intuition manifests itself and creates the essence of the work.

(5) It is the artist's task to make living forms and colour capable of arousing emotion.

5.1. A colour expresses itself in accordance with the form which it is determined by.

(6) In painting, the primary colour that is as pure as possible releases the abstraction of neutral colour.

6.1. The colour is the best means by which matter can be denaturalised into the realm of abstract constructions.

(7) Forms and colours must arouse emotions.

(8) Art is for art's sake; for form and content are one and the same thing.

8.1. The content of non-figurative art cannot be explained.

8.2. The subject is never of any value to pure art.

Mondrian did not set the rules and their sub-clauses out in this manner in the essay under consideration; it is for the sake of clarity that the above schema has been adopted. These rules establish Mondrian's concept of Neo plastic painting as being composed of neutral forms, free lines and pure colours. It was through the process of intensification - the evolutionary procedure of art - that Mondrian identified the rules described above. He continued by saying that it is only through the use of these rules 'that the whole sensual and intellectual register of the inner life' is constructed in art.

An example of the way in which these rules come into being can be shown through taking 6.1 'Colour is the best means by which matter can be denaturalised into the realm of abstract constructions'.

It was by recognising the implications of the action of thought and action of painting that Mondrian was able to advance into abstract painting and to propound his Neo plastic rules. A painting that demonstrates this point, particularly in relation to 6.1 is 'Church at Zoutelande' painted during the summer of 1909 and early 1910. In this painting, and there are many others exploring the same problem, a perceived physical object is submitted to the process of abstraction through the use of a range of colours that are not directly related to the perceptual stimulus. He explored the potentials of synthetic art.



(5) These rules of Pure Plastic Art form the core of the essay; the remainder is composed around these rules. As has been previously stressed, he related the pure quality of art to a historic tradition both directly and through implication. His essay also contains a defence of Neo Plastic Art when confronted with the question 'Why is it that figurative art is still so popular if Neo Plastic Art is so superior?'. His reply to this sort of question was broad in its content, for he put forward a defence of Neo Plastic Art that attacked qualities of human nature which he considered had, for the moment, lost the ability to understand spiritual values and as Neo Plastic Art was concerned with those values he quite well understood society's difficulty in realising the significance of Neo Plastic Art. He said that the reasons why society was unable to 'hear' him was due to its 'individual inclinations' and its base human instincts. These sort of phrases occur frequently throughout Mondrian's written work expressing not only the reasons for his concept of pure art, that of raising man from his base plane, through art, they create an analogy with the sort of spiritual purity that is the theme of much religious thought. As Mondrian's close friend A.P. van de Briel has said, Mondrian suffered from a continuing crisis of conscience.

Mondrian could have understood his art to have risen from the first plane of nature the physical, to the third plane the mental or even to the fourth the Buddhist, to use the Theosophic chart. His defence was that the popularity of figurative art was due to man's place, that of residing in the first plane alone. The following quotation gives further light to this subject.

In removing completely from the work all objects, the world is not separated from the spirit, but is on the contrary put into a balanced opposition with the spirit, since the one and the other are purified. This creates a perfect unity between the two opposites. (12).

Quite obviously, this statement is directed at the evolution and development of Pure Plastic Art, but in it there is implied a quality that can be interpreted and relates to many religious teachings. One example that readily springs to mind is the influence of Christ-upon the rich man who chose to forsake the material riches of his wordly life, to search for a spiritual life.

Mondrian insisted that art must strive to be pure and thus it will take possession of spiritual beauty, and this beauty he claimed could not be found in particular form. As was stated at the beginning of this section, the essay under consideration is, although relatively short, extremely complex in its conceptual content and implied history of concepts. In striving for purity in his paintings Mondrian painted a number of works of apparent and disarming simplicity, such as 'Composition with yellow lines' painted in 1933. In achieving this reduction of composition within a lozenge to four lines all painted yellow on a grey white ground, Mondrian found that he had brought into being a whole new body of ideas, ideas that had been hidden amongst the complexity of proceeding works. His process of reduction led to obvious painterly simplicity but there is also a hidden or implied complexity.

Mondrian had by 1917 arrived at a position where he was convinced that figurative art did not and never had revealed reality the hidden laws of nature. All that it had achieved was to give a form of credance to man's subconscious subjective arrogance. He categorised the role of figurative art as being only that of expansion rather than a process of intensification, meaning in this context an analytic search for reality.



It is not the exclusive role of art to reveal and to represent reality, or even to identify reality. The creative thinking of man has always been concerned with attempts to understand reality and to find ways of expressing this understanding. But man has always been unable to find one universal definition of reality, one that is universally acceptable. One of the major problems in philosophy of explaining reality revolves around the problem of mind and matter, this problem is one that as an artist Mondrian attempted to solve. Some philosophers have concluded that the only reality is the mind, this is the position reached by most idealists.

Mondrian did not deny the existence of the physical world, but he said of its influence:-

External stimulation is highly important to the non-figurative artist, it is indispensable because it arouses in him the desire to create that which he only vaguely feels and which he could never represent in a true manner without the contact with visible reality and with the life that surrounds him. It is precisely from this visible reality that he draws the objectivity which he needs in opposition to his personal subjectivity. (13).

And one further quotation that relates to the point presently under discussion.

To love things in reality is to love them profoundly, it is to see them as a microcosmos in the macrocosmos. Only in this way can one achieve a universal expression of reality. Precisely on account of its profound love of things non-figurative art does not aim at rendering them in their particular appearance. (14)

It is the manner in which various thinkers inquire into reality and the way in which they express the results of their inquiries, that divides them into their various disciplines. Mondrian, as has been shown above, propounded an understanding of reality that is closely related to that of many thinkers in many disciplines. By constructing his view of reality Mondrian altered the traditions of European art. His form of Pure Plastic Art had never previously existed, except, as Mondrian said, hidden under the veil of

figuration. Mondrian, in this essay, defined the process of intuition as being the only fundamental source from which his art could evolve, by implication, in accepting intuition as a universal, he said that all art must evolve from this fundamental source, and by doing so mankind would gain a universal understanding of the beauty of reality. The implication of this idea was to launch man, through art and its influences, towards a form of Utopia, a Utopia in which art no longer would exist as an independent entity but would be indistinguishably integrated into reality. But as Karl Popper has pointed out in many of his books especially in, 'The open society and its enemies', the sort of Utopian idealism that Mondrian propounded being based on deterministic principles, would logically lead towards totalitarianism. If Mondrian's concepts did follow this logical path, a schism would result between the man and his ideas. His flight from the European continent in 1937 and then in 1940 from England, caused by the onslaught of Hitler, substantiate this idea of the schism. Which raises a large question about the influence of his work as a whole, theory and painting. As his theories have not been logically extended in the universal sense that he believed they should be, has his art had any more of an influence than to a very limited, 'pure art', conscious audience?

Mondrian was though an optimistic human being, he did not share the pessimism of many of his fellow artists. His theories may not be completely valid in contributing to his optimistic view of humanity, but he attempted to express ideas that would contribute to the forward progress of society; this spirit of optimism is well expressed in the following quotation.



In spite of world disorder, instinct and intuition are carrying humanity to a real equilibrium, but how much misery has been and is still being caused by primitive animal instincts? How many errors have been and are being committed through vague and confused intuition? Art certainly shows this clearly. But art shows also that in the course of progress, intuition becomes more and more conscious and instinct more and more purified. (15).

This statement quite obviously gives his ideas and theories a meaningful role for the whole of society and it also demonstrates the manner in which art can be an active part of society. The manner of expression is again in terms of Theosophic and Calvinistic thought, for the supremacy that Mondrian gives to intuition can easily be equated to its existence as part of the fourth plane of the seven theosophic planes of transcendence. Whilst the consciousness displayed, a need to serve society practically has Calvinistic and Theosophic implications. The manner of expression that Mondrian gave to his optimistic ideas was such that it is possible to question whether or not he fully understood the nature of the ideas he expressed in written form, for his actual life suggests that if he had fully understood the implications of his ideas he would have posited them in a manner that would have avoided the sort of possible logical outcome suggested above.

(6) Mondrian's essay 'Plastic art and pure plastic art' has now been considered by way of an introduction to one aspect of Mondrian's life's work, the verbally expressed theoretical area. In examining this essay a number of individual issues have been identified that are pertinent to the consideration of his whole body of work. Some indication of the complexity of his apparently simple painting has been outlined, the idea of gaining an understanding of Mondrian's work through viewing it as an evolutionary process has been posited. Two illustrations are included at this point to give emphasis to the complexity of his visual and thus theoretical evolution.

The abstract painting 'Composition with yellow lines' painted in 1933 and mentioned previously, contains all the complexity and yet visual simplicity that Mondrian described in this essay. These sorts of qualities are summed up in the following quotation.

Intuition enlightens and so links up with pure thought. They together become an intelligence which is not simply of the brain, which does not calculate but which feels and thinks. Which is creative both in art and in life. From this intelligence there must arise non-figurative art in which instinct no longer plays a dominating role. Those who do not understand this intelligence regard non-figurative art as a purely intellectual product. (16)

The other illustration, 'Farm at Nistelrode', painted in 1904 is representative of traditional painterly values, but if this work is examined with care it can be seen that Mondrian was at this early stage in his career searching for an underlying structural visual order, as against attempting to draw just an expressive view of a farm. The subject and position in relation to the picture plane had allowed Mondrian to break it up into simple horizontal and vertical planes, there are three major horizontal planes and three major vertical planes. The farm and most of the works of these years should be understood as vehicles of study, if they are understood as such, as the notes in the 'Two sketchbooks' should be, the idea of a process of evolution will become apparent.

It has become increasingly clear that in order to gain an understanding of Mondrian's total work as an artist, his practical and theoretical work must be considered in close conjunction with one another and also his work must be seen in its relationships to painting and theories which had an influence upon Mondrian. But before proceeding to the main body of this study a point made by Israel Querido<sup>(17)</sup> in 1909 needs to be admitted. The occasion was the publication of a letter from Mondrian, Querido used this letter instead of writing a second critical column about the exhibition entitled: 'A study of the painters Spoor, Mondrian and Sluyters'.



Amsterdam Jan. 1909.

Of Mondrian's letter Querido wrote in conclusion this remarkable paragraph, it is here quoted in its entirety.

Now that he acknowledges himself to be aware that, despite the undercurrent of different spiritual life, as a painter he works like other non-occult or non-theosophically inclined persons, further warning is unnecessary. Nor is it fitting to analyse this letter from a critical literary point of view, or to point out its immaturity here and there and its strange philosophic confusion of dialectic principles as soon as he speaks of 'material' and 'spiritual' operations, the spirit of Mondrian lives not in his words but in his works. Experts might easily make a game of analysing his explanations. Therefore what one should respect is as an attempt at elucidating something complex which he is not able to master in words. (18).

Querido at this very early date of 1909 put the position, that of the relationship between Mondrian's painting and his theoretical work, succinctly for if there is a schism to be found between these two aspects of his actions it lies in a philosophic confusion, as has above been pointed out. Querido, although one of Mondrian's harshest critics, may have been able to see the manner in which Mondrian's painting would transcend that of two of his colleagues, Spoor and Sluyters. At the time of writing the letter to Querido, Mondrian was at Domburg painting the church, the dunes and the sea, these magnificent works and their enormous importance will be considered in the following section.

The task of the next chapters has become clear. It is to clarify and to qualify the way in which Mondrian's process of evolution took place and, by tracing this process, to bring to light and to question the issues raised in such a study.

Footnotes - Chapter 1

1. Circle, edited by J.L. Martin, Ben Nicholson, N. Gabo.  
Pb by Faber and Faber 1937. Rp 1971.
2. Mondrian was in Amsterdam from 1892-1904.  
1904 he was a resident in Uden Brabant for one year.  
1905 - 08 Rembrandt Plein 10 Amsterdam  
1912 - 14 Paris residence at 26 rue du Depart.  
1914 - 15 resident in Laren t'Gooi Holland, near Dr. M.H.J.  
Schoenmaekers the Dutch Theosophist.  
1915 - 16 discussions began with Theo van Doesburg.
3. Piet Mondrian. Plastic art and pure plastic art. Op cit 1.p.52.
4. See chronology, Mondrian's father was a Calvinist Headmaster  
at primary schools in Amersfoort and Winterswijk. Mondrian  
received his primary education at these two schools.
5. Plato 'The Republic' Tr H.D.P. Lee, Penguin Books pb 1955 rp 196  
'Theory of art' pp 370-379.
6. M. Seuphor. Piet Mondrian. Abrams New York, and in the  
Holtzman Archive where these books are stored.
7. Sixten Ringbom. 'The sounding cosmos', a study of the work of  
Wassily Kandinsky. Abo Akademi 1970.  
Chapter 3, 'the work of art and the artist'
8. Op cit, see n1.p.44.
9. Ibid p.55.
10. Op cit, see n5.
11. Op cit, see n1 p45.
12. Ibid p52, ditto 3.
13. Ibid p55.
14. Ibid p53.



15. Ibid p46,
16. Ibid p47.
17. Piet Mondrian 'Two sketch books', introduction R.P. Welsh.  
Meulenhoff International Amsterdam 1969, p9.
18. Ibid p9-10.

Chapter 2. Piet Mondrian's life and work, a biographical outline.

- Subchapters:
- (1) Mondrian's early and family years.
  - (2) Mondrian's evolution, an analytic structure.
  - (3) The evolutionary connections of his final works.
  - (4) Questions arising out of the considered evolution and his New York essays.
  - (5) Footnotes.



## Chapter 2

Piet Mondrian's life and work, a biographical outline.

Piet Mondrian was born on 17 March 1872 at Amersfort in Holland. He was the second child and eldest son of Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan (1839-1915) and Johanna Christina de Kok-Mondriaan (1839-1905). He died on 1 February 1944 in a hospital on 40th street New York City. His death was caused by pneumonia, he was aged seventy-one years and ten months. During the period of his life he had worked consistently as an artist for fifty-six years, developing a style of painting and positing theoretical propositions that are still directly and dialectically influential to this present day.

To reach an overall understanding of his life's work requires a careful consideration of the many facets that form the whole of his life, from his earliest years in the family home, which was at first in Amersfort and then in Winterswijk, Gelderland eastern Holland<sup>(1)</sup>, to his last days in New York. The necessity for this total view is due to the nature of Mondrian's evolution as an artist, which started with his very tentative beginnings and concluded in the last few days prior to his death, days in which he was hard at work upon a body of paintings that are the zenith of his evolution and career as one of the seminal figures of twentieth century art.

The first family home in Amersfort was at Kort Gracht 11, it served both as a home for the Mondriaan family and as a Calvinist Primary School of which Mondrian's father was the headmaster. In 1880 Pieter Mondriaan (senior) moved his whole family to Winterswijk where he took up another appointment as headmaster of the Calvinist Primary School. It was in these schools that Piet Mondrian received his education. The family was a strict Calvinist family, to the extent that Pieter Mondriaan (senior) was a great admirer and friend of

Abraham Kuiper. This man was at the time an influential Dutch Calvinist Theologian as well as being a staunch Christian Democrat. Consequently in his theological texts Kuiper presented himself as an ardent defender of the traditions of Calvinism. The strictness of these doctrines and the resulting paternal authoritarianism created a crisis of conscience in Mondrian that lasted for many years, and to such an extent that he even considered becoming a priest.

The strictness with which Pieter Mondriaan senior asserted his paternal authority can be seen in the accounts of a number of observations of the Mondriaan family. In his introduction to the 'Mondrian centennial exhibition catalogue' L.J.F. Wijssenbeck quotes from a letter dated 21 November 1959, it is a correspondence between Miss J.H. ter Weeme and Mrs. van Domselaar<sup>(2)</sup>. The former gives an account of her observations and impressions of the Mondriaan family formed between 1886 and 1900. Factually, the letter is open to question for Miss ter Weeme states that Mrs. Mondriaan was already dead, but as was stated above, Johanna died in 1905. The importance of this letter lies not in these statistical facts but in the descriptive observations and impressions, I will therefore quote from a part of the same letter.

It was a solitary family. The family gathered after school hours, left the village, re-entering about an hour later on the other side. Piet headed the procession, moving not stiffly but with a loose and rhythmic stride, a walking stick under his arm. He walked in a slightly lopsided manner, had a bearded face and was outfitted in a pressed dark suit and a bowler hat. Only once I had the courage to look into his face and then I was captured by dark eyes looking at me from far away. A few meters behind him walked the other boys and behind them came the father, tall, slim sporting a big beard, wearing a top hat and frock coat. He looked straight in front of him rather absent-mindedly. At his right walked his daughter. You never saw the two in conversation!



Mondrian's close friend A.P. van de Briel reinforces this impression of the solitary and paternally dominated family life of the Mondriaan family. Van de Briel first met Mondrian in 1898, he himself worked as a forestry engineer. He and Mondrian remained close friends for the whole period of Mondrian's life in Holland. That is to say from 1898 to 1919 when Mondrian returned to Paris. Mr. van de Briel like J.P. Slijper, Mondrian's other life-long friend, was given and collected a considerable amount of Mondrian's work, which, like Mr. Slijper's collection, is now in the Gemeente Museum Den Haag, where it forms a part of the basis of that Museum's excellent Mondrian collection.

Mondrian's father Pieter was himself a most competent amateur draughtsman and painter. His manner, as were his thoughts on art, was based on academic principles and there can be no doubt that it was he who first stimulated Mondrian's artistic urges. The second member of the Mondriaan family to influence Mondrian was his uncle Fritz Mondriaan, a painter who worked in the style of the Hague School of Painting. This uncle used to visit the Mondriaan's home in Winterswijk during the summer in order to paint landscapes. During these stays he no doubt gave instruction in and stimulated Mondrian's interest in landscape painting.

The Hague School of Painting evolved out of a number of influences. The first of course was in reaction to the academic and mannerist traditions of early nineteenth century Dutch art, the second main influence was that of the Barbizon painters. That school of painting had itself arisen out of a reaction against mannerism and academism, but also through the influence of Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting. The Dutch School of landscape painting developed an

Mondrian's close friend A.P. van de Briel reinforces this impression of the solitary and paternally dominated family life of the Mondriaan family. Van de Briel first met Mondrian in 1898, he himself worked as a forestry engineer. He and Mondrian remained close friends for the whole period of Mondrian's life in Holland. That is to say from 1898 to 1919 when Mondrian returned to Paris. Mr. van de Briel like J.P. Slijper, Mondrian's other life-long friend, was given and collected a considerable amount of Mondrian's work, which like Mr. Slijper's collection, is now in the Gemeente Museum Den Haag, where it forms a part of the basis of that Museum's excellent Mondrian collection.

Mondrian's father Pieter was himself a most competent amateur draughtsman and painter. His manner, as were his thoughts on art, was based on academic principles and there can be no doubt that it was he who first stimulated Mondrian's artistic urges. The second member of the Mondriaan family to influence Mondrian was his uncle Fritz Mondriaan, a painter who worked in the style of the Hague School of Painting. This uncle used to visit the Mondriaan's home in Winterswijk during the summer in order to paint landscapes. During these stays he no doubt gave instruction in and stimulated Mondrian's interest in landscape painting.

The Hague School of Painting evolved out of a number of influences. The first of course was in reaction to the academic and mannerist traditions of early nineteenth century Dutch art, the second main influence was that of the Barbizon painters. That school of painting had itself arisen out of a reaction against mannerism and academism, but also through the influence of Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting. The Dutch School of landscape painting developed an



attitude of pure perceptual response to the stimulant source, the landscape, and having received the initial stimulus attempted to depict the scene upon canvas in an as observably correct manner as possible. Barbizon reintroduced these attitudes and as a consequence became influential in stimulating and redirecting the Hague School of landscape painters. The consequence of this in relation to Mondrian, as his uncle's pupil, was that he was introduced to attitudes that were anti-academic.

Mondrian's father had a two-part influence upon his son's tentative beginnings in his career as an artist. On the one hand he introduced Mondrian to the general idea of art, from a classical academic standpoint, whilst on the other hand he presented Mondrian with a paternal authoritarianism against which he could react, for the tenets of Calvinist teaching are strictly deterministic and authoritarian. The paternal authoritarianism would no doubt have included ideas concerning the nature of painting. It is therefore possible that Mondrian considered in some way that authoritarianism, such as his father exerted, and academism were in some way closely associated, whilst the tenets of the Hague School of painting offered an alternative to the authoritative nature of academic art with which Mondrian had been parentally stimulated. Mr van de Briel considers that Mondrian's reaction against his father's strict deterministic discipline continued until the latter's death in 1915, by that time Mondrian was forty-three years old and had already established himself as one of the most 'avant-garde' artists in Holland. He was at that time also formulating through his work as a painter a second position, that of a theoretician, and the two activities were to lead to his Neo plastic postulates.

The reactions that Mondrian had against his father's artistic influence, reactions caused by over powerful paternal authority together with his uncle's Hague school influence, which represented a form of personal freedom, established, if only tentatively, an important factor from which Mondrian's evolution as an artist could proceed. This factor is best described as the dialectic principle, the thesis of this dialectic being his father's authoritarian academicism, the antithesis being his uncle's Hague school influence and thus Dutch landscape school and Barbizon School aversion to academic principles. The synthesis of this in Mondrian's art at this time was, as to be expected, work that combined both elements, those of seeing and recording and of executing in a stylistic manner that has traces of both the thesis and antithesis.

Again in the catalogue introduction mentioned above, L.J.F. Wijssenbeck quotes from a memoir written by Mr van de Briel just prior to the latter's death. I shall quote from it myself as it throws more light on the previous point.

Already at a rather early stage Mondrian sought to decide if it was of primary importance for the artist to express his own personality. This self interrogation had already started before he visited me in Brabant 1904. It went on all the time he stayed there and indicated a quite different approach from the ordinary development of an artist at that time. Especially after he moved to an attic room at the Rembrandt plien - 1905-08 - this problem presented a kind of spiritual conflict which was to carry over into his early years in Paris - 1912-

Mr van de Briel has in this memoir outlined the intuitively formulated antithesis that Mondrian developed towards not only the parental authority of his father but also to the implied authority of his artistic influence. It might be possible to pursue the theme of reaction to parental authoritative influence and to enter into the field of speculative discursive psychoanalysis. But I do not consider that this would be a fruitful form of enquiry for it would probably detract from the quality of Mondrian's artistic achievement



and influence. In addition to this such an enquiry would be based, in the main part, upon hypothetical and hearsay speculation rather than upon factually supportable speculation.

What is important in the pursuit of an understanding of Mondrian's work and his subsequent influence is the tracing of the development of his knowledge; the context of its development and his intuitive conscious use<sup>(3)</sup> of the dialectic theory outlined above. This requires that his style of life, his habitats and his friends must be taken into account. For they are all factors that contributed to the resolution of the dialectical problem of artistic self-expression. All of these contributed either directly or indirectly, positively or negatively, to Mondrian's evolution as an artist and theoretician. (2) As was suggested in the introduction, there are many real issues raised through the process of analysing Mondrian's work and as consideration is here to be given to the whole body of his work it is necessary to establish a structure against which and through which his development can be seen.

There are a number of factors which act as pointers towards the manner in which this viewing structure can be constructed. The first is Mondrian's concept of art as an evolutionary process. This concept he established in relation to the whole body of art in general and to his own art in particular. The concept of evolution is central to the whole development of Mondrian's theoretical propositions, both in relation to art and to the broader issues of life and humanity, as discussed in the introduction. The second previously mentioned factor is Mondrian's concept of the process of intensification as against a concept of expansion. For he believed and asserted that if the evolution of art was to continue, it would do so only through a process of continual intensification and not through any form of expansionary

process, which he believed and asserted would, and had, led to stagnation; this idea of stagnation he constructed from his personal analysis of the position of figurative art. These two factors were, in fact, both the result of this analytical process. But to base a consideration of his evolution solely upon his historic analysis would again be to disregard at least two other major categories, which also form a constituent part of his personal evolution. These two parts, together with the above, formed the operational base of his activity as an artist. They were, firstly, the physical world, secondly his conscious experiences, or more precisely the world of his conscious experiences, and thirdly the contents of museums, exhibitions, books, archives, and all such information sources.

These three constituent parts are of course Karl Popper's three worlds, interpreted simply in terms befitting a study of Mondrian's work. The constituent parts of the analytical process are the process of evolution, its nature and operation, the process of intensification, the dialectical nature of Mondrian's work.

A maxim that is descriptive of Mondrian's artistic aims is 'always further'<sup>(4)</sup>. It is the implications contained in this phrase in their broadest interpreted form that necessitates the use of the objective structure outlined above. For the maxim immediately raises two questions, the first, how did he go further, and the second why did he go further?

Of course in earlier paragraphs a considerable emphasis was given to the two processes of evolution and intensification and it could be said that the second of these answers the first question (How?) and that the first answers the second question (Why?). But what is not explained by using such answers is the manifold nature of the two answers. These can only be explained by analysis and



consequently by adopting methods of analysis that take account of both the general nature and the specific parts implied by the two processes.

(3) When Mondrian died in the spring of 1944 he left behind in his studio on 15th east and 59th street New York, a major but unfinished work, 'Victory Boogie Woogie'. This unfinished work belongs to and forms a very major part of what has come to be known as his New York series of paintings. The term refers to those paintings which were solely painted during the time that Mondrian was resident in New York, which dates from October 1940. Coupled with the 'New York City' series and 'Broadway Boogie Woogie'. 'Victory Boogie Woogie' forms the culmination of his life's work. This is of course a contentious statement, for the changes that Mondrian wrought upon his work during his New York period shocked and outraged many of his former admirers. For these people what is known as his mid-thirties classical period is the culmination of his life's work. His New York work is for them a sad decline, a decline in which he threw aside the beliefs and subsequent rules that he had worked so hard to establish as the rules of Neo Plasticism.

Having made the above contentious statement I will now try to establish two sets of reasons which will assert the validity of the statement. The first set is one that only fulfils a personal and subjective group of conditions, for having examined these last works in relation to the work of the mid 1930s - which I also greatly admire - I find the New York series to be the most beautiful, the most vibrant and the most stimulating and satisfactory. But this is not in itself an argument for their being the culmination of his life's work, it is only the recognition of their personal aesthetic appeal. To justify my statement it will be necessary to

detail considerations in terms of the factors outlined in the first paragraphs. Therefore questions must be formulated with regard to the New York series. The first general question is therefore, did they reach beyond the point achieved in the paintings of the mid-thirties? If they did how was this achieved?

The second question to be asked, is (and this could refute the answer to the first), was it through a process of intensification that they advanced and evolved?

Thirdly, and again the answer to this question could also refute the answers to the first and second questions, do they, the New York series, form a real part of Mondrian's personal evolutionary process? This leads to a sub-question, that of the nature of the process, and lastly, are they a real and significant part of the evolution of twentieth century art as his earlier Neo plastic paintings had undoubtedly been?

The paintings of the 1930s have been identified by Michel Seuphor, with the assistance of George Schmidt, as existing in eleven different subject groupings. I shall use the same subject groupings throughout this study for reasons of clarity and continuity with Seuphor's unavoidable and invaluable source of information. The subject groups of the 1930s were as follows according to Seuphor's listing.

1930/34 Classical composition with one horizontal and one vertical line.

1935 Composition with broad cross lines.

1936 Composition with one complete vertical and two complete widely spaced horizontals.

1937 Composition with complete vertical and two complete horizontals close together.



- 1938      Composition with two complete verticals and two complete horizontals close together.
- 1939      Composition with two complete verticals and two complete horizontals far apart.
- 1940      Composition with two verticals and two pairs of complete horizontals.
- 1941      Composition with two widely spaced verticals and two pairs of complete horizontals.
- 1942      Composition with two complete verticals not crossed by horizontals.
- 1943      Composition with multiplication of verticals and horizontals.
- 1944      Lozenges<sup>(5)</sup>.

These subject groupings do not follow in a chronological sequence and to identify them exactly into their overlappings requires the use of chart number 2 which also provides information as to the number of paintings in any given subject group and the total number for any given year. This chart has been constructed with horizontal and vertical co-ordinates in accordance with a modified version of Michel Seuphor's list. The modified list is appended to the chart.

There are a number of paintings from the 30's work that Mondrian calls classic compositions. This title has been applied to more or less the whole body of work from that period, i.e. those works forming the content of the above list. These groups of paintings developed the ideas of Neo plastic painting to a rarefied and pure point. In every case Mondrian simplified the compositions of the 1920's, balancing large areas against areas of divided surfaces in which he purified the primary colours, red, yellow, blue, black

and white being the neutral colours, white being used as the ground, black as line, except in one instance, 'Composition with yellow lines' 1933. More will be said about this work later. There are also seven canvases painted during this period that employ only the neutral colours, black and white, white as the ground, black as the structural elements of the compositional devices.

It was thought that in the works of the 1930's Mondrian had reached the ultimate synthesis of the implications of Neo plasticism, both in terms of composition with the primary colours and in terms of the use of the neutral colours. The term 'classic' means conforming to the rules of models of Greek and Latin antiquity. By naming his compositions classic no doubt Mondrian was referring to what he considered to be a distillation of the very essences of classicism. But the classic also refers to the static, and there is in the paintings of the 1930's a stationary quality, caused by the rigid nature of the black controlling lines of structure, this static quality was an anathema to the tenets of Neo plasticism which required dynamic composition. This was one of the formal elements that Mondrian discarded in New York, and by so doing he discarded an element that for many people made his work classic. The result of this action forced him to rework many of the paintings he had started in Europe.

Mondrian exhibited twice at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery, the first time in 1942, the second in 1943. The majority of works shown on these two occasions were selected from European and reworked European paintings. For after his arrival in New York - October 1940 - Mondrian had shipped to New York twenty-two unfinished canvases, thirteen of these were completed before his death and there remain nine unfinished canvases that had been started in



Europe, e.g. Paris and London. The New York series consists of four finished works and three unfinished canvases. The reworked European canvases date as far back as 1935.

There is an importance that can be and very often has been related to the three venues of this whole body of work, Paris, London and New York. It is thought and postulated by some that the flickering colours of 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', for example, is a direct reference to the flickering lights of Broadway itself, in its night time clothes - for Mondrian is known to have greatly admired this scene - and of course the title itself is misleading in this respect. This reading of the work can be coupled with the view of his critics who threw up their hands in despair saying that he had turned against the very rules that he had established in theory and practice, those that he, Mondrian, had painstakingly developed during the period 1915-17 and which had been clarified during the following years culminating in the classic works of the 1930's. But Mondrian's actual decision to break some of his rules in the New York series of paintings exemplifies his whole process of evolution, with which he had been concerned and through which his work had evolved.

Considerable emphasis has been given in many books and articles<sup>(6)</sup> to Mondrian's actual physical experiences of New York, as was indicated above. This in itself is a reasonable recognition of a part of the cause of the changes that his painting underwent in that city. But if consideration is given to both his practical work and to his theoretical work of this period the answer of environmental, phenomenal influence is too simple, too one-sided. It could be called the empirical solution, a solution that does not, though, take into account the spirituality of his total work oeuvre which still remained as a harmony between inwardness and

outwardness. If, then, the empirical solution is accepted as the reason for the changes that occurred in Mondrian's paintings in New York then there had been a misunderstanding of Mondrian's life's work.

To explain this point of dispute with greater clarity requires that the universal principles evolved by Mondrian be considered and, then applied to a critical view of his work. These principles accounted for, in Mondrian's view, the very essence not only of painting but of reality itself. His work therefore should always be understood as an attempt to synthesise this dual quality in terms of a greater expression of visual clarity. Thus the term 'classic composition', embodies the synthesis of these parts and also it emphasises Mondrian's recognition of universal principles, those principles that have been asserted to be the underlying structure of both reality and art since the times of antiquity.

Mondrian believed that Neo plasticism once again had unveiled the universal principles of art and reality and by so doing he was able to express the very essence of reality. Throughout his working life since the time he had first postulated the principles - 1915-17 - he had continued to clarify and intensify them. In 1942, coupled with his first exhibition at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery he published his last essay entitled 'Toward the true vision of reality'. This essay was based on his earlier writings and in it - as can be seen in all previous essays - he continued to clarify and subtly modify issues that he had begun to write about in 1912 and 1913<sup>(7)</sup>. In this final essay he expressed the problem of reality in the following manner.



To create pure reality it is necessary to reduce natural forms to the constant elements of form and natural colour to primary colours. The aim is not to create other particular forms and colours with all their limitations but to work towards abolishing them in the interest of a larger unity.

If then the flickering coloured squares of 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' were meant as the flickering lights of Broadway itself, Mondrian would have broken one of the most significant Neo plastic and thus universal principles, the principle that states that particular form is not expressive of reality. As a consequence of this action much of his life's work would have to be refuted. Above, though, it was stated that in the New York series he did break the rules of Neo plasticism, so why did he not break the rule of particular form? The answer to this question lies in a distinction between Neo plastic rules and Neo plastic principles, universal principles.

The principles evolved for Mondrian out of a continually developing cognizance of the nature of reality and the essence of art. The Neo plastic rules were rules that referred to the compositional devices evolved for the expression of the nature of those universal principles. Thus it can be said that Mondrian, in the New York series, challenged, changed and broke the compositional rules of device that he had asserted. But he did not break, nor did he believe he could break the universal principles of which he had become cognizant. Therefore the compositional property of vertical and horizontal remained, the primary colours were reinforced and their properties further examined. Asymmetry was further intensified thus increasing the property of the dynamic. It was this element, the dynamic, that Mondrian had found to be absent in the 'classic', paintings of the 1930's, and by reintroducing it into his paintings in the New York series he returned to the implications of the seascapes and compositions of 1914-17,

and to the implications of the paintings with coloured rectangles, 1917-18.

The recognition by Mondrian of the implications of previous work forms the central core of the argument for an evolutionary process as being the basis of his work, and to understand the New York series is to understand this process. The titles could well have been chosen for their expression, of what Mondrian considered to be fundamental rhythm expressed in 'Boogie Woogie'.

Mondrian's work is fundamentally spiritual, its concerns were always with a striving towards this quality. He understood spirituality as being based upon a harmony between inwardness and outwardness and the achievement of that harmonic condition could not be visualized through the use of particular form, nor could it result in particular form, e.g. the lights of Broadway. It also could not result in an attempt to express in visual terms inwardness alone as is expressed through the visualization of emotive response, as can be seen in surrealist painting for example, or in the visual expressions of emotion which had been used to a great extent by Theosophist writers - Mondrian was familiar with many of their writings. The work of these writers and their influence and relation to Mondrian's art will be considered in depth later, suffice to say for the moment that he did not accept the manner in which they visualized emotions, which usually resulted in the use of particular form. His rejection of the visual explanations of the Theosophists came about through a process of testing, this process of testing forms a most important part in the overall process of Mondrian's evolution. For throughout the whole body of his life's work this process of testing, of finding acceptable or refuting, can be traced.



To explain this point with greater clarity and to relate it intimately to the New York series I will use two paintings, both of which were started in Europe, the first in Paris, the second in London. They are called 'Place de la Concorde' and 'Trafalgar Square' and they are representative of the point from which Mondrian made his transition from his mid and late thirties European style - the classic period - to his New York style. 'Place de la Concorde' was started in 1938 and 'Trafalgar Square' in 1939, both were completed in 1943 and exhibited in Mondrian's second exhibition at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery.

As was stated above it was out of the quality of classical static purity that a part of the dynamism of the New York series was to evolve. A painting such as 'Composition with blue and yellow', 1935, is an expression of this quality of classical static purity. In this work Mondrian used thin paired black vertical lines, with slightly thicker black horizontal lines. Towards the latter part of the 1930's this juxtaposition of linear proportion was replaced by the use of thicker black lines - both the vertical and horizontal lines being of the same width - used both horizontally and vertically in pairs, as for example in 'Composition in white, red and yellow', 1938. The lines had, therefore, by 1938 become an overtly rigorous structural device, emphasising the static nature of the overall composition. There is a feeling present in these works of this period that can be called a feeling of brutality, of menace, whilst 'Composition with blue and yellow', is delicate and finely balanced. In addition to the change noted above, Mondrian had by 1938 begun to use the heavier lines in greater horizontal and vertical profusion, which had resulted in the surface of the canvases being divided into many more rectangular sub-divisions .

Both the paintings, 'Place de la Concorde' and 'Trafalgar Square', have a complex rectangular format that is in both instances the result of black horizontal and vertical lines of compositional structure. But in reworking them and finishing them in New York, Mondrian developed a planeal usage that he had only indicated as a visual hypothesis in earlier paintings. The forms to which I refer are to be seen in the painting, 'Composition with red and black', 1936, in which a small black rectangle is placed at the top of the left hand edge. This rectangle is bounded on one side only by a black line, which is on its right hand vertical edge, its left hand edge abuts the left hand edge of the canvas. Its two horizontal edges are unbounded. In both, 'Place de la Concorde' and 'Trafalgar Square', Mondrian intensified this formal element.

The main structural compositional differences that occur between these two transitional works 'Place de la Concorde' and 'Trafalgar Square' and the New York series proper are to be seen in the manner in which Mondrian used in these two works an openness of rectangular plane in the centre of each painting. In 'Trafalgar Square' there is a central column of rectangles, rectangular planes that ascend from the bounded multidivisional bottom edge of the canvas, to an unbounded top edge. The bottom multidivisional bounded edge is composed of nine small rectangular planes - in vertical axis - four of which are bounded on only one side - their top edge. This is similar to the small black rectangle found in 'Composition with red and black'. In 'Place de la Concorde' there are twelve small rectangular planes which are bounded on only one side. In both these works the bounding line is horizontal as against being vertical as in 'Composition with red and black'. The central columns of rectangular planes ascend or are balanced



upon these complex areas of varying primary and neutral coloured rectangular planes. The most extreme example of Mondrian's use of the central - unbounded top edge - rectangular plane can be seen in 'Composition with red, yellow and blue', 1935-42. But this plane is not balanced upon the unbounded small rectangular planes, they are employed along the right hand edge instead, in fact in this work both the top and bottom edges of the central rectangular column abut the edge of the canvas.

In the two paintings, 'Place de la Concorde' and 'Trafalgar Square', the differently proportioned central areas are bounded on varying sides by closely packed uneven rectangular grids. These grids are defined by black vertical and horizontal lines of an even width. The rectangular planes thus created are painted in primary colours and neutral white. But as has been indicated, the areas created by the black grids are further subdivided by primary coloured unbounded rectangles in juxtaposition to neutral white rectangles.

For example, in the painting 'Place de la Concorde' the right hand side is constructed through the use of three vertical black lines and four horizontal black lines. This section of canvas is further broken up into twenty varyingly proportioned and coloured rectangular planes, whose positions have not always been determined by the intersections of the horizontal and vertical black lines of structure. This change is also the implication of the small unbounded rectangular planes in 'Composition with red and black', 1936. The elements that these complex rectangular planiar structures bound, in 'Place de la Concorde', are the open central areas made up, in the instance of 'Trafalgar Square', of five rectangles, the three central rectangular planes being more or less of the same proportions, and in 'Place de la Concorde'

where there are again five central rectangular planes which form the central area of the canvas. This compositional device can be traced back in rectangular form to such work as 'Composition 2', 1922, in which Mondrian employed a similar compositional structure to that which he employed in 'Place de la Concorde' and 'Trafalgar Square'. There are of course elements in the 1922 composition that had been discarded as the process of evolution moved through time to the 1940's. One example is the way in which several of the black vertical and horizontal lines in, 'Composition 2', do not meet the edges of the canvas. This is one device that did not survive and it will be discussed in terms of its relative contribution and value later.

Two of the formal elements that evolved through the transitional works, 'Trafalgar Square' and 'Place de la Concorde', have now been established. But there is one other painting of the 1930's that is of great significance to Mondrian's painting. It is the painting - previously mentioned - 'Composition with yellow lines', 1933. It does in fact form a part of the lozenges series that Mondrian started to paint in 1918 with 'Lozenge with grey lines'. The series was concluded with the unfinished 'Victory Boogie Woogie'. Above, it was stated that during the 1930's Mondrian painted a number of compositions consisting only of black lines on white grounds. Prior to the 'New York City' group, 'Composition with yellow lines' is his only painting in which black has not been used since 1917-18.

The implication and the seminal significance of 'Composition with yellow lines' is that it reidentified for Mondrian the possibility of dispensing with one neutral colour, a colour that had played an overwhelming role as a linear structuring device since 1918. These yellow lines suggested for the first time the



possibility of using a primary colour in a linear manner, thus, like the small black rectangle in 'Composition with red and black' it - 'Composition with yellow lines' - presented a visual hypothesis.

In the painting 'New York', 1941-42, Mondrian fused the possibility of a linear structural grid painted in primary red with another grid painted in neutral black. The significance of the red grid is that it overlaps the black grid, and thus one of the Neo plastic rules - not a universal principle - had been broken. For since the two paintings of 1917, 'Composition with colour planes on white ground (A)', 1917, and 'Composition (B)', Mondrian had not employed overlapping planes or overlapping lines. His reasons for this were based upon his attempt to develop a surface of painting that was real, meaning that it contained no illusionistic space. The development of the postulates of Neo plasticism militated against illusionistic space. Now in 1941-42 Mondrian appeared to have broken that very rule. This in fact is not the case for whereas in the two paintings in 1917, mentioned above, the overlapping planes and lines floated freely away from the edges of the canvas thus evoking illusionistic space. In 'New York' Mondrian tied the red lines and the black lines forming the grids firmly to the edges of the canvas thus emphasising the fact that although the red overlapped the black they both physically existed on the surface of the canvas.

The use by Mondrian of edge has been mentioned above. It existed as a continually developing property from the early 1920's. In some paintings of that period he enclosed the canvas with a thin wooden, grey or white painted frame. This frame was set down from the edges of the canvas thereby allowing the canvas edges to achieve a truly physical being. This property is well demonstrated in the

painting, 'Composition with yellow lines', 1933. By identifying the edge as a positive element he identified the picture plane as being a physical flat plane and non-recessional, thereby stating its real quality.

The overall composition of 'New York', is similar to that used in, 'Trafalgar Square', and , 'Place de la Concorde'. There are five central rectangles of varying proportions formed by the two grids. The five rectangles are balanced upon and bounded at their bottom edge by a band of vertical unbounded primary coloured rectangles, five in all. The left and the right hand edges of the painting are also made of unbounded primary rectangles.

The next step in the evolution of the New York series was made in 'New York City 1', 1941-42. It consisted firstly of discarding the black linear grid and of substituting for it three overlaid grids. These grids in fact are interwoven into each other, the blue into the yellow in horizontal axis, and the red into the yellow in vertical axis. This interweaving did not occur in, 'New York', in which the red grid existed completely on top of the black grid.

In 'New York City 1', at the points of linear intersection which are in close proximity, small rectangular planes of white ground were formed and these small planes have a close proportionate relationship to the points of intersection of the yellow verticals and yellow horizontals. The effect of this proportionate relationship is to cause a small square to appear at the points of yellow intersection. The lines are thereby broken up and a flickering quality is established, or, more correctly, an optical vibration. This property also occurs when the other two primary coloured lines intersect with the yellow lines.



The result of this colour property is twofold; firstly the white ground loses its earlier negative relationship as a colour, which is one cause of the optical vibration. Secondly, an overall vibrating, pulsing and thus dynamic quality is established. A quality that is reliant upon and has been brought into being through the overlapping and interweaving of the three primary coloured grids in compositional relationships. The dynamic property of this canvas is most important for the rules of Neo plasticism, in fact one of the universal principles of Neo plasticism and De Stijl was the recognition of dynamic force as an inherent universal force.

The composition of the 'New York City 1' completely changed from the previous 'New York' painting. No longer did Mondrian employ the central open area of rectangular focus. By using a multiplicity of lines forming the three grids he achieved an overall quality of vibrating rectangles. The overlapping grids were in fact the result of a process, which was not adopted by Mondrian until after his arrival in New York. It consisted of using tapes, of pinning them on to the canvas and then moving and adjusting them until he was satisfied with the compositional relationships thus formed. More consideration will be given to the significance of this later.

'New York City 1' was followed by Mondrian's last major finished painting 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', the painting supposed by some to be particular as discussed above. This belief can only be related to the causal nature of their own subjective aestheticism, for it does not take account of the major change that occurred in this painting. In this painting, 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', there is a synthesis of many of the elements that Mondrian had discarded as early as 1917 and the colour properties that he developed in

'New York City 1' and 'New York'.

In these two paintings an important factor can be noted, that of the logical development of the implications of previous work, not just chronologically prior but dating back to discarded themes of the period 1914-18 and to 1933, 'Composition with yellow lines'. In the painting 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', Mondrian continued this progression. The small optically created squares of, 'New York City 1', he painted as real squares, and these small squares are not determined by the linear intersections as they were in 'New York City 1'. The principle of linear intersectional determination has once again been transcended, as it was when Mondrian began to employ unbounded rectangles, as mentioned above. In 'New York', 'Trafalgar Square' and 'Place de la Concorde', unbounded primary coloured rectangles are set against a line which forms a part of the grid structure, in, 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', unbounded primary coloured rectangles are placed in or on the basically yellow structural lines. In addition to employing primary colours for this purpose Mondrian used a blue-grey, reminiscent of the blue-greys of the 1920's. 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' contains therefore two synthesised possibilities in the one painting. Firstly the use of unbounded rectangles which evolved through the paintings discussed above. Secondly the idea of breaking up the structural rigidity through the use of interwoven lines and small rectangular planes, planes that only existed optically in, 'New York City 1'.

The next step in this rapid evolutionary process - beyond that of the all over quality of 'New York City 1' - can be seen in the sub-division of the rectangles formed by the grid; not only did Mondrian subdivide these rectangular areas, the areas are in themselves subdivided and overlaid by small inset rectangles,



which in some instances are painted in a primary colour, whilst others are painted in the blue-grey of the small rectangles in the grid structure. Where Mondrian painted blue-grey on red or elsewhere on yellow or in one instance yellow on blue, he caused optical vibration to occur, a vibration that is of the same general type as that noted in, 'New York City 1'. The idea of optical dynamics has therefore been intensified to a greater extent in, 'Broadway Boogie Woogie'. The surface created by the development of these changes is such that the multiplicity of differing proportions of rectangles has increased. But once again the field areas, the white areas, take on a more positive role as was attempted less successfully in, 'New York City 1'. Again Mondrian established and created a quality of surface depth, but it is again held firmly in place through the relationship of the grids to the edges.

Mondrian's final work, 'Victory Boogie Woogie', is, as stated above, a lozenge, it is also unfinished. But even in this state the same logical process of development and thus evolution can be observed. The structure is still based on a 90° axis format but it is considerably less obvious than in any of the preceding paintings. Where small rectangles have been used to break up lines they have been multiplied, but not only have they been multiplied, they have themselves been sub-divided. This is the first major change from 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', excepting of course the lozenge format. The second, which is most significant, is that horizontal and vertical lines, built up of these rectangular elements no longer touch the edges in all instances. In some instances they begin and finish inside the lozenge. Another significant fact is Mondrian's reintroduction of black, but it is reintroduced in such a way that it is no longer the dominant colour of structural lines, but as a

unitary part of both the structural grid and as a rectangular colour subdivision of the larger rectangles formed by the grid. The third significant change is in Mondrian's use of the colour blue-grey, for in 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' he used it in terms of a rectangular subdivision colour, in 'Victory Boogie Woogie' he employed it as main areas of rectangular colour together with white. At this point it would appear that the idea of positive and negative colours had been more or less abolished by Mondrian. If this is the case then, 'Victory Boogie Woogie, is not a painting constructed according to rectangular figure-field relationships, but it is a painting of rectangular relationships. There is no longer a figure, as the three grids are in, 'New York City 1', nor is there a field because the grid has to be so subdivided and intergrated with what was field that the dual nature of the two no longer exists, the synthesis has been completed. It is important to note that Mondrian was able to achieve a flat real picture surface without completely tying it to the edges of the lozenge, but also one with a certain amount of optical ambiguity.

The synthesis of structure, positive and neutral colour, figure and field can be expressed as the complete integration of space and structure, and expressed in this manner the universal significance of Mondrian's final unfinished painting becomes apparent. For one of the main preoccupations, if not the main preoccupation of his life's works was to visualize the harmonic dynamic balance between the elements of the universe. He had reduced these elements in one set of instances of horizontal and vertical, which had given his canvases both structure and space, these two elements had beocme during the 1930's increasingly separable. But by becoming so he had created for himself the conditions whereby he could integrate them once again in a manner



that was indicated in, for example, 'Pier and ocean', 1914, and secondly he found that he could give to space a positive role such as that implied in, 'Composition colour B' and in 'Pier and ocean'. To expand the result of the evolutionary process a little further in relation to, 'Victory Boogie Woogie', it is possible to say that in this painting he resolved for himself the twofold complete integration - synthesis - concerning the problem of the dualism of reality and the complete integration of the problem of figure and field in painting. In 'Victory Boogie Woogie', space and structure become completely inseparable and totally interdependent and dynamic. It is to this point that the New York series evolved, with the process firmly rooted in past work.

(4) The importance of considering the chronological development of all these formal changes and their implications is that by so doing they demonstrate the reason for considering Mondrian's final works first. For the point to which he evolved in 1944 raises the possibility of formulating and asking two questions. The first of these is, how did he come to paint these monumental paintings, the New York series? The above information does not satisfactorily answer that first question, all that it does is to indicate avenues of inquiry. The answer can be found if all the formal changes that took place in his work be identified and considered. Such details as have been identified above have a direct bearing upon the evolutionary process that led towards the New York series. There are also the indirect elements of change which are important but they have not as yet been clearly identified.

The second question, and again its type was mentioned above, is, why did he come to paint the New York series? A simple answer is found in the maxim 'always further', but this is not enough, its

content has to be revealed, if in some areas only through speculation. However, part of the answer to this question can be found in his writings. The type of consideration needs to be of the same type as that applied to the formal consideration of the above paintings. The evolutionary development of his writings must be seen through the application of an analytical procedure.

Somewhat earlier there was a quotation from Mondrian's last published essay, 'Towards a true vision of reality'. It cannot be said that Mondrian's writings achieved the stature of his paintings, especially his New York series, but what can be said is that the writings evolved through a process that is analogous to the manner in which the paintings evolved. This final essay is a clear concise statement. Its concerns are with a personal history of theoretical and practical change. It is written in an obvious autobiographical style, a style not often previously employed by Mondrian. The basis of this essay can easily be traced back to the notes made in the, 'Two sketchbooks', 1912-14. These notes formed the basis of the essays Mondrian published in the De Stijl magazine and thereby formed the basis of most of his subsequent writings concerning his practical and theoretical stance.

Tracing back theoretical propositions from, 'Towards a true vision of reality', to the, 'Two sketchbooks', not only brings to light the changes that Mondrian's theoretical evolution underwent but also it brings to the fore the direct and indirect influences that assisted and instigated these changes, these were the same general dialectical processes through which the paintings evolved. When Mondrian died in New York he had in his possession three books or booklets, 'Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld' (a new picture of the world) written by Dr. Schoenmaekers, a work by Krishnamurti, the Indian mystic, and a published speech by Rudolf Steiner. As these books



and paper indicated, the influence of Theosophy is easily found in Mondrian's writings. It appears frequently in the notes in the, 'Two sketchbooks', and it is likely that he considered those notes to be actual theosophic writing, for he had joined the Dutch branch of the Theosophic Society in 1909. There is also no doubt that he considered some of his earlier paintings to be true theosophic visual realisations. 'Evolution', painted in 1911, is the most obvious example.

The phrase that is most descriptive of Mondrian's working methods is 'trial and error'. It is applicable to the whole body of his work and to his life. It was not for Mondrian purely an objective method of procedure, for there can be no doubt that his subjective, even subconscious, feelings influenced, brought about and stimulated changes in his evolution as an artist. Trial and error is, though, the manner in which he developed and it was his recognition of the significance of the process that enabled him to achieve his stature as one of the most significant artists of the twentieth century.

Mondrian's final unfinished painting, 'Victory Boogie Woogie', is the culmination of his search for visual expression of the universal principles of Neo plasticism and of the rules that he postulated for the search. It took from 1917 to 1944 to find one incomplete solution to the problem he set himself and it took thirty-one years for him to even identify the problem in a tenuous theoretical form, therefore it could be said that by 1917, having started in 1886, he managed to establish a point from which to begin.

Footnotes - Chapter 2.

1. See map of the Netherlands.
2. Wife of the composer, Jacob van Domselaar, a close friend of Mondrian who composed music in a 'Neo Plastic' style.
3. Intuitive conscious: as Mondrian's consciousness developed, meaning his knowledge of the universal laws, he was able to state that it was from intuition that all art springs; see his essay 'Natural reality and abstract reality'. M. Seuphor pp. 301-352. Piet Mondrian. This idea is also close to Immanuel Kant's concept of intuition in its relationship to apriori concepts. See also Albert William Levi. 'Mondrian as metaphysician', Kenyon Review, vol X11 1951, no 3 pp. 358-393.
4. 'Always further', the synopsis of a phrase used by M. Seuphor, in the final chapter of his book 'Piet Mondrian', to describe the essence of Mondrian's aim. pp.195-196.
5. This is M. Seuphor's list of categories, it is used to maintain continuity with his seminal book.
6. See M. Seuphor, H.L.C. Jaffé, Mondrian, Thames and Hudson 1970. Barbara Rose, Mondrian in New York, Art Forum Dec. 1972, Joseph Masheck, Mondrian the New Yorker, Art Forum October 1974, pp. 58-65.
7. Piet Mondrian: 'Two sketchbooks', Compiled by Harry Holtzman, Robert Welsh and Joop Joosten, contains the transitional sketches and notes of Mondrian's move from Cubist art to Neo Plastic Art, through Post Cubist Abstraction.



Chapter 3. The early years, 1888-1892.

Subchapters: (1) The traditions of his pre-academy work.

(2) An outline of seventeenth century Dutch art  
and the climate of those times.

(3) The founding of the Barbizon School of  
painting.

(4) The Hague School of painting and its  
importance to Mondrian's evolution.

(5) Mondrian enters the Academy of Fine Art,  
Amsterdam.

(6) The reasons for statistical graphic studies.

(7) Footnotes.

### Chapter 3

The early years 1888-92.

The earliest recorded work by Mondrian is a drawing made with charcoal and crayon on paper called, 'Woods with stream', 1868, it is a very skilful drawing made when Mondrian was sixteen years old. It was made during the period that he was undergoing self-training prior to sitting the state examination in drawing which would enable him to teach drawing in primary schools. He took and passed the exam in 1889. He had left school in 1886 with the intention of becoming an artist, but at his father's insistence he studied for the teaching exam mentioned above.

The drawing, 'Woods with stream', is most significant for it shows Mondrian's involvement at this very early stage of his career with one of his main subject themes, trees. During the period 1886-89 Mondrian received instruction in art from his father and from his uncle, Fritz Mondriaan. What is particularly interesting about this early drawing and a number of other drawings and paintings, apart from the thematic point mentioned above, is their stylistic and subject relationship to the traditions of Dutch seventeenth century painting, especially to landscape painting. The detailing in Mondrian's, 'Woods with stream', is worked with the same degree of precision as that which can be seen in paintings by Gillis van Coninxloo. An example of this relationship is Coninxloo's 'Forest', painted in 1598. Not only is Mondrian's emphasis on detail similar to Coninxloo's, but his manner of composing the recessional space through the use of tree trunks as vertical space determinants is closely related to Coninxloo's. This early period of Mondrian's artistic studentship was spent quite obviously learning from the masters of his country's artistic heritage.



His work of this period infers that he made a number of freely interpreted copies from either prints or reproductions. There is no evidence to suggest that he travelled to various museums to see the actual oil paintings at this stage of his career.

In the Gemeente Museum, The Hague, in the Mondrian collection there is a painting called 'Dead hare', painted in 1891. Not only has Mondrian selected the subject from the traditions of Dutch still life painting, but the composition of the hare on the canvas is very close to that used in a painting by Jan Weenix, which contains a suspended dead hare. This painting is in the Queen's collection at Buckingham Palace. Mondrian's painting does not include the complex background of the Weenix painting, but the position of the hare and the attention to detailed precision in depicting the hair on the animal has in Mondrian's painting the same degree of fineness that can be seen on the work by Weenix.

How Mondrian came to use the subject matter of the dead hare and its compositional position is of course a matter of speculation, for it is most unlikely that he could have seen a painting by Jan Weenix at Winterswijk, it is possible though that he could have seen a print or reproduction. For if his father was keen that he should gain an academic grounding in art, no doubt he attempted to stress this influence through showing his children works by the masters, at least in some reproductive form. The painting called, 'Ships in the moonlight', painted by Mondrian in 1890, further substantiates my speculation that a considerable amount of Mondrian's work during his period of self-education was in making free interpretations from the work of the Dutch seventeenth century masters. The adaptive copying approach to artistic education would no doubt be in keeping with his father's view of art education<sup>(1)</sup>.

In relation to the painting, 'Ships by moonlight', Robert Welsh has suggested that this painting<sup>(2)</sup> could have been influenced by the mid nineteenth century Dutch artist J.T.H. Abels, 1803-66, whose work followed in the traditions set by Aert van der Neer. Welsh also points out certain indications of the way Mondrian's compositional use of planes are set parallel to the picture plane, as can be seen in this painting. There is, as in, 'Woods with stream', and 'Dead hare', evidence in this painting of Mondrian's early considerable technical ability<sup>(3)</sup>.

As well as the academic influence of his father during this period, Mondrian received instruction from his uncle. This influence can be seen in landscape paintings that Mondrian executed at this time. There is conclusive evidence that Fritz Mondriaan visited the Mondriaan family during the summer months to paint in the landscape around Winterswijk.

There are two paintings executed by Mondrian in the early 1890's which attest to his involvement with landscape painting in a similar manner to his uncle; 'Dusk', painted in 1890, and 'Hay sheaves in a field',<sup>(4)</sup> painted in 1891. One of the methods of painting used by the painters of the Hague School was to paint from the actual subject on a one-to-one basis. The method came to them from the Barbizon School of painting, by whom the Hague School were considerably influenced. This was not the method of the Dutch seventeenth century landscape painters who worked from sketches onto canvas in their studios.

It is then in subject matter and not method that some of Mondrian's early landscape paintings, as well as those of Fritz Mondriaan, bear a close relationship to the traditions of Dutch landscape painting of the seventeenth century.



Not only in his relationship to the Dutch tradition, it is related to the Barbizon School, through Fritz Mondriaan and the Hague School. This conception of painting brought to Dutch art the quality of an inner search, a search concerned with the individual's relationship to, and his observation of, the time and the environment in which he lived: see for example Vermeer's 'View of Delft'. The conception of painting and more generally of art as being an inner search is a highly important concept in the gaining of an understanding of Mondrian's art. What must follow in the next paragraph is the tracking of the history of this concept.

(2) In the work of Frans Hals, for example, whose work was primarily concerned with portraiture, his subject was always placed firmly in the time in which he, the subject, was painted, and as a consequence of this, Hals examined the time in which he himself lived.

The painting that evolved in the Netherlands during this period, the seventeenth century, was an art that characterised a people who had an intense love of things in terms of their personal response to immediate external objects. In addition to this quality the art of the Netherlands was also the result of a people who were developing an acute national and republican identity.

To further explain the general relationship of Mondrian's evolution as an artist to the traditions of Dutch painting, it is necessary to outline the political developments that led to the establishment of the seven provinces, those that are called the Netherlands. For it is from the establishment of this republic that Dutch life and culture as we know it today evolved and it was from this ever-developing climate that Mondrian received his initial general stimulus.

The foundation of the Republic of the Netherlands was brought about by the signing of the Treaty of Utrecht in 1579. The purpose of

the Treaty was to bind together in a republic the seven provinces of Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Gelderland, Overijssel, Friesland and Groningen. The reason for the coalition was to gain freedom from the rule of Spain and Phillip the Second.

Of great significant to the development of Dutch culture during this period was the relative calm that prevailed, once Republican freedom had been gained and established. For all over the rest of Europe strife damaged cultural and economic development. The Dutch, unlike many states, maintained their democratic and liberal spirit. Observers writing about the state of Dutch cultural life wrote of the enormous interest that the burghers had in collecting painting. Painting thus became the dominant form of art. This was caused by a lack of great patrons, such as an absolute monarch, who no doubt would have commissioned architecture and sculpture as well as painting.

Religion in the Netherlands had by the middle of the seventeenth century reached a point where Calvinism had become dominant, but it was not then, and never has been since, established as the State religion. The Dutch state was able to allow Jews, Lutherans, and others to practise their beliefs freely. The only officially banned religious teaching was Catholicism, but even this form of doctrine was not persecuted if conducted in private. Calvinism had, and still does have, though, a strong effect upon the Dutch people's attitudes to morals, developing the idea of man's role being the service of his fellow men. As Mondrian grew up as a Dutch Calvinist, it is important to fully understand the significance of the historic background out of which he grew. Dutch art was not, though, dominated by Calvinism in the seventeenth century, nor has it since been dominated by the Calvinist doctrines, its development, has owing to the causes outlined above, been democratic.



From about the year 1685, continuing onwards through the eighteenth century, the quality of Dutch art declined and as it did so the artists came more and more to be dominated by the influence of the academic French school of art. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that Dutch art once again asserted itself and this was in fact due to the influence of the French Barbizon School and the more general influence of that part of European Romantic movement that returned to the concept of art as the individual study of nature. The philosophic ramifications of Romanticism are enormous and these will be left until the appropriate section for proper discussion<sup>(5)</sup>.

(3) There are two major artistic influences in the field of painting that led to the establishment of the Barbizon School, the first was Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting, the second was the work of the English landscape painters, especially Constable and Bonnington. These two movements formed the visual theoretical stimulus for the anti-theoretical stance of the Barbizon painters to the academy and institutionalised artistic values. The work of these two English artists was exhibited in the, 'Salon', of 1824 with very great impact. Constable's painting was, unlike much contemporary French painting, based upon his own very personal studies of natural phenomenon, this attitude coupled with other current attitudes and a reappréciation of Dutch seventeenth century landscape painting led towards the School of Barbizon.

The French political turmoil of the nineteenth century led to a political stance among some members of the loosely-knit Barbizon School, the most obvious example being the stance taken by Courbet. This side of Barbizon did not, due to the political stability of the Netherlands, directly effect the Hague School. Barbizon was established through the

stimulus of the forces outlined above, as a reaction to French academism. This academism and its influence had led to the decline of Dutch art in the eighteenth century as well as to the decline of French art. As a force in art, academism held social status<sup>(6)</sup> and it was against its aesthetic and social dominance that Barbizon, and as a consequence, the Hague School, reacted.

The group of painters that took their name from the village of Barbizon, were active from about 1830 to 1870. They became active during a century that was dominated by two opposing intellectual forces, those of science and romanticism<sup>(7)</sup>. The early paintings of the Barbizon painters tended towards the romantic view of art, the influence upon them in this trend were the paintings of Paul Huet, whose work they greatly admired. But as the school developed their work became more realist and objective. The concept of realism formed the basis of the Barbizon School and thus of the Hague School and it should be noted here that Mondrian always referred to himself as a realist<sup>(8)</sup>.

The romantic protagonists determined that a spiritual rebirth should be enforced upon a society that was in the nineteenth century becoming increasingly dominated by science, technology and bourgeois self-assuredness. It should also be noted that the decline of Dutch art in the eighteenth century was socially due to the continual rise of the bourgeoisie to a position nearing nobility. This position had demanded artistic dress rather than an art concerned with the inner search of the great Dutch masters. It is this quality of decorative academic dress that the Romanticists and the Realists reacted against before reacting against each other.

The founders of Barbizon developed a dialectic in relation to the position they found themselves in. On the one hand they were full of admiration for and were very familiar with seventeenth century Dutch



painting, with the influence of Poussin and the new influence of English landscape painting. Their reaction or rebellion was against the position of the artist in society, against the teaching he had to undergo and the frustrating domination of academism as exemplified by the school of David. In fact academic officialdom did not even consider landscape painting to be an acceptable art form.<sup>(9)</sup>

By accepting a dialectical position the Barbizon painters introduced a philosophical role into their work, for their paintings were not concerned simply with the depiction of a scene, their concern was with the complexity of view as a state of mind. They determined to make and believed that their task was to make an art that acted as a language.

The work of the Barbizon painters with its stark realism shocked and infuriated many art critics. The Barbizon painters had, though, an acute awareness of the complexity of their society and they understood the destructive forces of industrialization, they therefore reacted in their ideas and their paintings against the narrow-sightedness of the bourgeois and ruling class. The methodology of their reaction enabled them to gain an understanding of the implications of objective empiric artistic research.

The techniques of painting developed by the Barbizon painters were of course a reaction against the traditions of paint usage,<sup>(10)</sup> they daubed unblended colour onto their canvases and by so doing achieved a vivid colouration which acted as the forerunner of Impressionism. But with the rise of Impressionism and of Paul Cézanne the art of landscape painting as propounded by the Barbizon School began to be less concerned with observable reality and more concerned with a mental or conceptual view of nature, that is not to say that it became academic once again, rather the search for reality behind the appearances of nature became the driving force.

The Barbizon painters had intended a fusion of man with nature through the language of their paintings. Two short quotations from the writings of Theodore Rousseau serve to emphasise this point.

'Everything has its source in what is universal.' 'Nature yields herself to those who trouble to explore her, but she demands an exclusive love. The works of art we love, we love only because they are derived from her. The rest are merely works of empty pedantry.'

(4) In the catalogue for the exhibition, 'Piet Mondrian and the Hague School', Nancy Dillow records a statement made by the artist, A.G. Bilders. It expresses strongly the attachment of the young nineteenth century Dutch artists to the Barbizon painters. In 1860 Bilders wrote:

'I am looking for a tone which we call coloured grey, that is a combination of all colours, however strong, harmonised in such a way that they give the impression of a warm and fragrant grey.'<sup>(11)</sup>

Miss Dillow follows with another most significant quotation from Bilders:

Troyon, Courbet, Diaz, Dupre, Robert Fleury have made a great impression on me. I am a good Frenchman therefore, but as Simon van der Berg says, it is because I am a good Frenchman that I am a good Dutchman, since the Frenchmen of today and the great Dutchmen of the past have much in common. Unity, restfulness, earnestness, and above all, an implicable intimacy with nature are what struck me most in these pictures.

Bilders in the second quotation has given a succinct account of the process of the positive influences that led to the development of these two schools of painting in France and then in Holland. The Hague School grew up not through any formal grouping of artists, but simply through a process of artistic recognition of joint interests accompanied by the slow coming together in the Hague of several artists who found that independently they had developed a common aspiration. Their aspiration was to unshackle themselves from the academic traditions. Thus Barbizon acted as a real stimulus and



support to their aspirations.

The city of the Hague, the seat of Government, was and still is an excellent city for artistic enterprise, it was especially suited to the development of landscape painting. The art that developed there followed along the same general subject paths as those of the great painters of the seventeenth century. The Hague School of painting came into being early in the 1870's. This date is unsure, as the School, as stated previously, was not a formal establishment but a loosely knit group. Quite a number of its members were in fact born in the city, Willem Maris for example, the youngest of the Maris family. Others such as Israels, Mauve and Mesdag moved into the city, Israels in 1871. Many other artists although not living in the city maintained a close contact.

Josef Israels is thought of as the father figure of the Hague School of painting, but in fact he was the only one whose concern was with the portrayal of people, his work was concerned with such themes as 'Dredgers' and 'Going home: mother and son twilight' (12). His studies were all concerned with gathering information for these subjects. The majority of the other painters concerned themselves with landscape, with a secondary staffage of cows, people, and boats, as can be seen in Willem Maris's painting 'White cow on ditchbank', or Jacob Maris's 'View of a truncated mill'. Mondrian's work as a landscape painter followed this trend.

The pictorial elements that link the paintings of the Hague School artists together can be seen in their depiction of landscape, in which they use low sharp horizons, vast skies, and dominant verticals. These were elements that Mondrian later said were universal to all painting. Also they are exactly the elements that became dominant in the works of the great seventeenth century Dutch masters. In addition to this link, there is an important quality that is common to the seventeenth

century Dutch artists, the Barbizon School and the Hague School, it is a quality of the consciousness of contemporary time. Their expression of this quality was gained through their studies of nature and recording their personal responses and reactions to the environment in visual form. This as a general concept of art was one that was adopted by Mondrian and modified to be compatible with the time in which he lived.

The work of the Hague School painters was concerned with space and with light rather than with objects in space. This means that they accepted space as a positive pictorial element and thereby were able to harmonise staffage with the space. Their other concern was with the general human spirit, rather than with individual human qualities. Thus they attempted to express the human condition as reality in the same manner as Courbet and Millet. Their work if understood in these terms was therefore concerned with two sets of universals, the pictorial and the human. Their pictorial universals were concerned with the composition of space, light, mass, form, and line, the other group concerned human reaction to the national environment. Their art, like the art of their great predecessors and like the art of the Barbizon painters, was an introspective art concerned with universal properties and thereby became an art of universal significance.

The themes that they re-established as the themes of nineteenth century Dutch landscape painting and the manner in which they constructed their paintings formed the basic influence upon Mondrian's subsequent development as a landscape painter. Unlike the Barbizon painters, the Hague School of painters do not seem to have been concerned directly with the rise of socialism, they developed in the long established stable democratic bourgeois climate of Holland, which was, as stated above, free from the sort of political turmoil of France.



(5) In 1892 Mondrian took the second state drawing exam, which allowed him to teach secondary school drawing. During the period in which he prepared himself for this exam he briefly studied with a minor Dutch romantic painter, Jan Braet van Ueberfeld<sup>(13)</sup> who lived at Doetinchem, which was thirty-five kilometres from the Mondriaan home at Winterswijk.

Michel Seuphor in conversation with Mondrian's youngest brother, Carel, discovered that Ueberfeldt<sup>(14)</sup> had collected and filed meticulously, reproductions of paintings and related press cuttings, many of these he loaned to Mondrian. Apart from the enjoyment that the Mondriaan brothers gained from these files, it must be presumed that their contents had a direct bearing upon Mondrian's development.

Mondrian passed the second state exam in September 1892<sup>(15)</sup> and then enrolled at the Academy of Fine Art in Amsterdam in the November of the same year. His reason for sitting the two state drawing exams was to fulfil his father's wishes, who believed that by holding the two certificates Mondrian would always be able to earn a living if he was unable to do so through the pursuit of the profession as an artist<sup>(16)</sup>. Mondrian was a full-time student at the Academy from 1892 until 1894, after that he attended two years of evening classes in drawing. His two exams in drawing had exempted him from two years of drawing instruction which formed the basis of the syllabus at the Academy.

A part of the nature of the artistic climate in which Mondrian found himself in Amsterdam in 1892 has been described above in relation to the national influence of the Hague School. In addition to this artistic force, plus the influence of academism at the Academy, he was also confronted with Symbolism and with its links with such movements as Theosophy. These influences will be discussed in due course as they had more effect at a later date in his development as an artist and theoretician.

Just prior to his arrival in Amsterdam, Mondrian had painted a number of still life works, four of which were exhibited at an exhibition called 'Kunstliefde' in Utrecht. Two of these works were included in the very important exhibition of Mondrian's work at Toronto in 1966, they were 'Still life: jug and onions', and 'Still life: herrings'. These paintings should be seen as being directly related to the traditions of Dutch still life painting of the seventeenth century. For example a painting by Pieter Claesz simply called, 'Still life', now in the Boymans Museum, Rotterdam, is an obvious possible influential source for these paintings, for in composition and subject, Mondrian's two paintings have much in common with it. The significance of these paintings is twofold in Mondrian's development.

Firstly, his artistic ability was recognised, as is recorded by Robert Welsh in the Toronto catalogue, where he quotes the, 'Utrechtsche Proven Stedelijk Dagblad', 27 April 1892, in which the critics said of Mondrian's still life paintings that they were painted 'with great exactitude and were lovely in colour, bright in lighting but ... lacking in poetic mood'. These comments, leaving aside the latter, which is possibly more a subjective comment than an objective observation, give early recognition to Mondrian's artistic ability. The second point that needs to be recorded is that the, 'exact', ability recognised in the newspaper enabled Mondrian to earn a small living through copying old masters in museums on a commission basis for clients in and around Amsterdam.

The two points just considered relate to the paintings of 1892. In addition to this, these still lifes are important in terms of subject matter, for in them Mondrian depicted humble everyday Dutch household objects. These sort of objects formed the subject matter of Mondrian's important transitional canvases, 'Still life with ginger pot' 1 and 2, painted in 1911 and 1912, the period during which



Mondrian moved to Paris. Further discussion of his first visit to Paris and these paintings will be made a little later.

In addition to the still life paintings of 1892, Mondrian worked upon a number of other themes, one of which was churches. By the time he enrolled at the Academy in November 1892, he had established for himself eight subject themes. During his stay in Amsterdam this number was increased, but these eight themes formed an important part of the external visual subject stimulus through which his work developed.

See graph no. 1.

(6) The graphs and the perspective computer drawings have been devised in response to a problem. Early on in this study, it became obvious that it would be necessary to gain an overall or evolutionary picture, one that could be demonstrated, of Mondrian's life's work. Books such as Michel Seuphor's or Hans Jaffé's are excellent in many respects but they do not provide an objective 'visual picture', they record many useful facts and speculative ideas regarding Mondrian's work, but the distinction is not easily seen between idea and fact, except of course in Seuphor's catalogue. I decided then that I should attempt to solve this problem, to draw a firm distinctive line between fact and speculation. Speculation with regard to Mondrian's work seems often to be based upon value judgements, indeed I have had to rely on this process and will have to again. But there are facts and they can be used to construct a number of statistical pictures. Such a 'picture', has to be constructed in conceptual terms. To translate this conceptual 'picture', into visual terms, with a degree of precision in advance of that offered by the two mentioned sources, whilst still basing the facts of the 'picture', upon these sources, became the aim of this aspect of the study. Of course Seuphor's catalogue is quantitative, the idea that motivated the first of the graphs or maps was to assimilate all the quantifiable facts relating

to Mondrian's visual output in one graph.

Graph no. 1 was constructed by using three sets of facts, the years of Mondrian's life, the subject headings according to Michel Seuphor's analysis of Mondrian's work<sup>(17)</sup>: the third group of facts are the number of works made in any given year in any given subject.

The figures shown at the point of intersection of the year and subject co-ordinates were arrived at through the use of Seuphor's book with the additional resource of publications since his book, including museum, exhibition and saleroom catalogues. The numbers of works are not intended as being a definitive quantification, as previously unknown works are continually coming to light. For example, one unknown drawing was discovered in the back of a carefully framed drawing in the Mondrian collection at the Haags Gemeente Museum, also some early graphic work carried out when Mondrian was a resident in Amsterdam has been discovered. The graphs and the computer drawings will not be generally effected by these finds, they can be adjusted in accordance to the finds. The aim of the graphs and drawings is to present an abstract and quantative view of a given body of information. What graph no. 1 does not do for instance is to identify differing media usage, these sorts of details would need to be recorded upon secondary graphs.

The computer drawings are an extension of the attempt to find a solution to the problem outlined above. The reason for this extension is to give even greater visual clarity to the overall statistical view depicted in graph no. 1. The number of works has been used as the third co-ordinate. Together with the year co-ordinates and the subject co-ordinates a three-dimensional perspective picture can be gained. The first of these graphs has its faults as it gives a very fragmented view, the second graph, although more general, gives a more concise view. What these graphs attempt to do is to relate three



sets of facts to a recognisable schema, that of perspective illusory pictorial space.

All of these statistical graphs can be used in conjunction with Michel Seuphor's book, and with the majority of other work on Mondrian's artistic career.

The consequence of having constructed this form of statistical viewpoint has led me to the realisation that as a general schema these forms of graphs and drawings are applicable not only to the study in progress but to the study on any artist or school of artists. For example, a statistical graph and a computer plot could be constructed to give a picture of the evolution of seventeenth century Dutch landscape painting or of the Barbizon School, for both of these schools of painting evolved through various visual propositions, the changing propositions being stimulated by various sources.

As has been demonstrated above through the use of the graphs and the computer drawings, it is possible to give a statistical picture of the evolution of his visual work. But his work was also concerned with theoretical writings. These writings can be subject indexed, dated and numbered. Therefore the same form of statistical information views could be constructed.

But these writings, like Mondrian's early visual work, were stimulated and influenced by a vast number of sources. These can be categorised into subject definitions, placing them into group three of the 'third world' theory, for example the Hague School influence or the influence of Theosophy, these facts present two workable sets of information through which a graph could be constructed. To arrive at a third co-ordinate is, I think, impossible, as it would require the use of value judgements that are, in terms of the objective facts previously used in graph no. 1, unobtainable. For example, it has

been recorded when Mondrian studied with Ueberfeldt, but what we cannot truly know is the influence Ueberfeldt's archive had upon him, and any judgement relating to the importance of these influences must be entirely speculative. The charts and graphs concerning this aspect of Mondrian's evolution, group three of the 'third world theory', would have to be constructed in a two-dimensional schema.



Footnotes - Chapter 3.

1. Albert Boime in his book 'The academy and French painting in the nineteenth century', has carefully detailed the academic syllabuses used in art education in France during the nineteenth century; due to the linking of the Academy in Amsterdam with that in Paris, it must be presumed that the traditional copying studies required in these syllabuses would have been known by Mondrian's father and instilled into his sons as the basis of artistic education. Pb by Phaidon in 1971.
2. See page 27 Mondrian catalogue Toronto/Philadelphia/The Hague 1966.
3. Op cit 1; as Boime has so succinctly pointed out technical ability in execution was one of the essential demands of the artistic educative process.
4. Hay sheaves in a field, collection S.B. Slijper, Bequest to Gemeente Museum. This painting is contentious as some art historians believe that it may not be a Mondrian; this question is based on the paint handling.
5. The term Romanticism has been used so often with regard to the classification of parts of the visual arts that its meaning has almost no real descriptive value. What can be said is the Romanticism or the Romanticist attitude was the antithesis of classicism or more exactly academism, for by definition the subject matter of much classicist painting is more romantic than much so called romantic painting.  
  
In my view it is wrong to subsume Friedrich and Theodore Rousseau in the same Romantic classification, Friedrich was a Romantic Germanic dreamer, whilst Rousseau was a Romantic Realist.
6. Op cit 1 in which a very detailed account of the complexity of this issue is given.

7. This is a complex issue and the division cannot so easily be drawn, it did exist in some instances, whilst in others science or pseudo science was the bedrock upon which Romantic theories were built.
8. The term Romantic Realist can be applied to the Barbizon School, to the Hague School, and consequently to Mondrian.
9. The issue of the sketch was one that dominated argument in the French Academy during the nineteenth century. Op cit 1.
10. Their paint usage was considered to be that of the sketch and did not meet with the acceptable requirements of finish set by the Academy for acceptance into yearly exhibitions. Slowly though the argument swung in their direction. Op cit 1 and opcit 10.
11. Piet Mondrian and the Hague School of Landscape painting, published by the Norman Mackenzie Gallery, Regina, Canada 1969.
12. Ibid.
13. M. Seuphor. P. Mondrian. Abrams, pages 46 to 47.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid page 45.
16. Technical competence would enable Mondrian to carry out commercial work upon which he could financially subsist; indeed there is considerable evidence that Mondrian did in fact execute a considerable amount of purely commercial work.
17. Op cit, see n14, pp. 355-356.



Chapter 4. Mondrian at Rijks Academie and his period of landscape painting, 1892-1908.

- Subchapters: (1) Mondrian's years of academic studentship, 1892-96.
- (2) Mondrian's post academy period of painting and the beginnings of his experiments with Symbolism, 1896-1903.
- (3) Mondrian's year of painting along the rivers Gein and Amstel.
- (4) Mondrian's first visit to Brabant and his sojourn in Uden Brabant, 1904-05.
- (5) Mondrian's return to Amsterdam in 1905, his landscape paintings drawn from subjects to the south of Amsterdam including Duivendrecht.
- (6) Mondrian's development of 'Nocturn', landscape paintings, 1905-06.
- (7) Mondrian's second period of painting along the Gein, 1906-07.
- (8) Mondrian's concentration upon Symbolist experiments, the crisis of Theosophy, 1908.
- (9) Footnotes.

## Chapter 4

(1) Mondrian's period of studentship at the Academy in Amsterdam lasted from 1892 to 1894 and then took the form of attendance at evening drawing classes during the years 1894 and 1896. The director of the Academy, Rijksacademie voor Beeldende Kunsten, was August Allebé. His influence upon Mondrian would have been in terms of academic values. Mondrian was accepted into the third year of the course of instruction at the Academy because he had passed the two state examinations previously mentioned.

The syllabus of the Academy like that of its counterpart in Paris maintained a very rigorous system of artistic education, beginning with the process of copying from prints, the student progressed to working from parts of the plaster cast to the problem of drawing the whole cast, such as that shown in Allebé's painting 'The old attendant'. The next stage with which the student would be confronted was drawing from the life figure. This was followed by composition and at this time the student would begin to use paint, working upon canvas, preparing sketches and later finished canvases. This stage again took the form of copying from the master works, but this time in museums. It has already been noted that Mondrian had, prior to his arrival at the Academy, been involved in the procedures of copying and freely interpreting copies from the master works.

The compositional demands of the academic system revolved around historic themes, the reason for this was based upon the aims of the course of study, which were three, the first and general aim was to maintain historically proven and therefore aesthetic values, the second, a more specific one, was to prepare students for entrance into the exams for the Prix de Rome. The third aim of the course was to give a traditional artistic grounding to the aspiring student artist such that it would enable him to earn a living, possibly through



original works of art, but also through being able to execute saleable copies and by executing commissions. The Academies grew up out of the Guilds and the Atelier system of art education and it was to these institutions that customers turned for original works, copies and commissions. It had become traditionally important that the aspiring artist be grounded in the requirements of the institutions if he was to achieve a livelihood. But the academic institutions had, a long time before Mondrian became a student in the system, developed a pervading obsession with 'dessin et fini'. This influence can be seen in the quality of his works executed before his entrance to the Academy. For example, 'Woods with stream' fulfilled the academic demands of a finished drawing and his painting 'Still life with dead hare' demonstrated his ability to execute freely interpreted copies from master work sources. There was a third category contained in the academic syllabus, one that had been admitted during the nineteenth century that of landscape painting and study. Mondrian arrived at the Academy in Amsterdam equipped with experience of landscape.

At the Amsterdam Academy there can be no doubt that the landscape schism existed. Mondrian's education had, up to the time he failed the Prix de Rome final exam 1901, been something of a paradoxical nature, on the one hand academic institutionalised aesthetic values and demands and the other being what can loosely be called the Independent attitude.

After 1901 he decided to adopt the second of these options, thereby resolving the paradox for the time being. But it did continue to exist for him through the nature of commissions he was forced to execute to gain a livelihood. The other more subjective elements that formed this paradox were on the one side the domineering influence of his father's academic standpoint, epitomised

in 'Woods with stream' and 'Dead Hare', and his uncle's independent Hague School influence, such as can be seen in Mondrian's 'Hay sheaves'. Works that are representative of the academic influence during his student period in Amsterdam are 'Girl writing', which is drawn in the technique required by the academic drawing syllabus, i.e. a figure modelled in light and shade through the application of the technique of hatching, a second example of Mondrian subscribing to academic requirements can be seen in his submission for the Prix de Rome, 'Standing nude' 1901. This was carried out after he had completed his period of study but whilst he was still eligible for receipt of the Prix de Rome.

The independent quality can be seen in his beautifully executed work 'Landscape with ditch'. This work, which employs the compositional device of reposoir used by Salomon van Ruysdael in the seventeenth century and Corot in his landscape painting. Mondrian's work though differs from both these predecessors in that it has no staffage, this relates it to the attitudes in the Hague School represented by Jacob Maris rather than Jacob Israel.

(2) In relation to Mondrian's subsequent development this work already contained some of the major structural elements that Mondrian consciously recognised and formulated at a later date. The manner in which Mondrian constructed the composition of this landscape study is such that he achieved a pictorial area balance across the entire surface. He divided the surface into three main areas with horizontal and vertical subdivisions, see diagram (1), the areas are notated a, b, and c. The harmonic balance of this work is also emphasised through the use of a close palette of blue/greens. Mondrian's palette at this period was developing in terms of the naturalistic greens and atmospheric grey/blues so commonly found in Hague School naturalistic Impressionism.



In the mid 1890's there were two distinct technically based elements present in Mondrian's painting, carefully contrasted water colour and impasto oil. In his use of oil paint he was beginning to achieve the loose brush stroke of the Barbizon painters. The issue of the brush stroke and its implications was one that troubled the Academicians for almost the whole of the nineteenth century. Its origins can be traced back to Frans Hals and to the late Rembrandt. To the Academy the loose brush stroke embodied the problem of 'fini', it was the technique of the sketch and therefore did not contain traditional proven aesthetic value.

In the paintings of the Barbizon painters the brush stroke took on a new significance, marks began to exist in relational independence. For example, Monticelli's 'Chemin de montagne'<sup>(1)</sup>. In fact Monticelli worked with paint directly from the tube, a technique that had a considerable influence upon Vincent van Gogh.

Mondrian's early attempts in the 'sketch' use of oil paint can be seen in his painting 'Farmhouse with clothes line' 1895. Whilst his water colours of the same period display a precision of finish and delicacy of technical control more in keeping with traditional academic values, see 'Forest', 1898. But like 'Landscape with ditch', 'Forest' is a study in which Mondrian's search for overall pictorial structure, through perceptual response can be seen. See diagram no. 2. The oil painting 'Farmhouse with clothes line' has also some spatial structure but its real experimental nature was in the paint handling. This element of painterly experiment was far more pronounced in two paintings of 1898/1900, 'Woman with child in front of a farmhouse' and 'Woman in front of a farmhouse'. Both these paintings are loosely and freely worked and the whole was built up of flat textural planes. There is pictorial space but it is indeterminate due to the concentration upon paint quality,

rather than object detail. Thereby Mondrian achieved an overall pictorial unity in another manner than that of 'Landscape with ditch'. Mondrian's preliminary sketches were also at this time achieving a looseness and immediacy of style, one that continued in fact until the culmination of his life's work in New York. For an example of the period under discussion, see 'Horse at the water's edge'.

Mondrian's work as a painter during this period 1898/1900 can be understood as possessing a number of firmly based facets upon which he was able to forward the evolution of his work, through the process of empirical inference. Firstly there was his high degree of academic competence, with its accompanying knowledge and recognition of the use of copying, exactly and freely from the master-works. Secondly, there was his experimental consideration of the 'sketch' and its inherent technical problems. Thirdly there was his development of pictorial structure and fourthly he had begun to develop the cohesive link between the first three, the preliminary working sketch. These were executed in a variety of media and on a variety of papers and sizes of paper. They explored the fundamentals of composition, structure and tonality, see 'Barge' 1889/1900<sup>(A & B)</sup>.

There was one other facet to the development of Mondrian's work during this period, but it is one that throughout his career he attempted to keep separate from the mainstream of his development, it was that of his commercial work. The activity through which he was able to gain a small living. But in fact this activity had to be concomitant with his personal artistic development.

The subject groups of Mondrian's work had by 1898/1900 reached nine, with the exclusion of his commercial activity, see graph no. 1.



Mondrian's development was at this time through the stimulant sources of direct perceptual response coupled with an empirically gained knowledge of the masters and his immediate predecessors in the Barbizon, Hague Schools and Amsterdam Schools. This later school was an offshoot of the Hague School, and as was mentioned earlier, the Hague School was a loosely knit group and out of this free association developed such painters as G.H. Breitner<sup>(2)</sup> and Suzy Robertson<sup>(3)</sup>. The subject matter of these painters was still landscape, but landscape that drew mainly upon townscape as its visual source, especially Amsterdam, whilst the Hague School maintained subject matter that was primarily bucolic.<sup>(4)</sup>

The influence of Breitner upon Mondrian in terms of subject can first be seen in drawings made during the year 1898, or about that date. The subject is a canal bridge and a barge basin, presumably in Amsterdam, see 'Canal bridge'<sup>(5)</sup>. It was during this period 1898/1900 that a mixture of symbolism and naturalism began to appear in Mondrian's work, the precedence for the symbolism has in a general manner been cited as Caspar David Friedrich's work. His influence has been called the search for the sublime. R.P. Welsh, writing about Mondrian's etching of 1898 'Reformed Church at Winterswijk' compared this print to Friedrich's 'Church of Eldena', but he says that 'the conception here is less specifically fraught with overtones of Romantic Weltangst and a mediaevalizing fascination with the past and human mortality'<sup>(6)</sup>.

What though is significant in this etching and in the accompanying gouache version is the manner in which Mondrian has drawn the trees, the branches have been depicted in a subtle linear manner that has a stylistic relationship to the decorative symbolism of Jan Toorop's symbolist paintings, see 'Sketch', 1892/97. But Mondrian's treatment of the branches has also a visual similarity

to the manner in which J.H. Weissenbruch treated his depiction of branches in 'Woman and the wash', made in gouache and charcoal, it is therefore difficult to conclude that the influence upon Mondrian at this time was directly from any of these sources.

Toorop's use of graphic linear symbolism was of a more decorative nature whilst that of Weissenbruch was of a more descriptive value. The obvious compromise is to suggest that if any of these influences are present, those of Friedrich, Toorop and Weissenbruch, then Mondrian's etching and the inherent considerations are a subtle synthesis of all three.

There are two elements in these works that are formally and symbolically significant to the development of Mondrian's work, they are the vertical monumental symmetry of the church and the graphic design of trees which creates a grid pattern across the surface of the picture plane or very close to the picture plane, this grid pattern is predominantly parallel to the picture plane.

A number of students of Mondrian have warned against attempting to find sources for his later work in his earlier work. In my opinion their warning is challengeable for if an evolutionary process is accepted as the process of his work, then his empiric response to the implications of the grid pattern could well be important. The process of evolution to which I refer can simply be called trial and error, this method was followed by Mondrian as it was by his predecessors.

His next step in this process of trial and error, in the development and testing of symbolism, can be seen in his two paintings, both made in 1900, 'Portrait of girl with flowers', and 'Spring idyll'. The girl in the first of these is the youngest of the two in the second. In the top left hand area of this painting is the 'Reformed church at Winterswijk' and the same grid pattern



is used again, created by the graphic description of the branches. The children in both these works are idealised and naive in expression with upturned eyes. The flowers, as Robert Welsh points out<sup>(7)</sup>, are rhododendrons, a flower that Mondrian drew on a grand scale at the later date of 1908.

In his book on Mondrian, Michel Seuphor recorded that in a conversation with Mondrian's youngest brother, Carel, that his attention was drawn to the fact that the three brothers all living together in Amsterdam during the late 1890's, became interested in Theosophy. Both in Amsterdam and Paris quasi-religious movements such as Theosophy had become associated with artistic movements, this was one of the results of the concept of individualism in Romanticist theory. It is therefore possible that in Mondrian's two paintings, the naive quality and the upturned eyes symbolise the individual seeker of mystic knowledge. The influence upon Mondrian in his formal use of this symbolism is again Toorop and Mathius Maris<sup>(8)</sup>, see 'The bride'. Mathius, unlike his brother Jacob, had been influenced by mystical romanticism in Germany, whilst his brother had been influenced by the romantic realism of the Barbizon school.

The combination of naive idealised children and the reformed church is an anomaly, the children refer symbolically to ritualistic milieu, whilst the church symbolises an anti-ritualistic milieu, it is probable that the overall symbolism of this painting is descriptive of the complexity of the problems with which Mondrian found himself confronted at this point in time. Being those of painterly problems and religious problems. The battle between ritualised religion and puritanical iconoclasm was, during this period, a highly contentious issue in the Netherlands. Ritualism even became associated with anti-establishment movements.

During 1900 Mondrian also began to paint single flowers, see 'Chrysanthemum'. This subject continued until 1922 in a wide ranging variety of media. During the later years, to 1922, although the flowers were beautifully executed, their intention was simply financial. During the period 1900 to 1911 the single flower held great symbolic value for Mondrian, they represented the life cycle in all its many, many facets. The flower also held for Mondrian a symbolism of purity, one that was removed from the instinctual bestiality of man.

In addition to the introduction of literary romantic symbolism in 1900, Mondrian developed another important formal device, one based upon perceptual response. In the painting, 'Wax candle factory' 1900/01, the factory is reflected in the water. Apart from this painting's relationship to the same subject by Breitner, its importance is the reflection. An element that played a significant part in Mondrian's subsequent development. As can be seen in diagram no. 3, the vertical elements, the chimneys, reflected in the water break the surface of the canvas up into four vertical rectangular sections. Not only do they create these rectangular sections, the reflections also create an ambiguous reality of 'top and bottom'. This ambiguous element became more and more pronounced during the next few years. In recognising it, Mondrian not only discovered a structural pictorial device but he also raised the theoretical question for himself of what constituted reality, a question with which he became increasingly concerned and one that linked the symbolism of 'Spring idyll' to his vision of 'Wax candle factory'.

There are two other paintings made during the same year that embody the implications of reflections, they are both of the same building, 'House on the Gein'. The first is a water colour on paper,



the second an oil on canvas. The latter was painted in the oil technique employed in 'Woman with child in front of a farmhouse' and there is of course a possibility that it is the same farmhouse as the one depicted in the two paintings now being considered.

In the oil painting Mondrian made very obvious formalised use of the reflected farm building to construct a symmetrical composition, see both reproductions of the subject. The former work executed in water colour has the same precision as that used in 'Forest' and contains the same symmetrical elements constructed through perceptual response but they are not emphasised to the same degree as in the oil painting. The oil painting through its overt symmetry and painterly technique achieves a greater degree of all over picture plane solidity, whilst the water colour was constructed with empiric recessional pictorialness.

(3) At this point it is possible to draw an intermediate conclusion, for it is obvious that Mondrian had at this stage of his career consciously recognised a number of important pictorial elements upon which he would develop and which he could test. The elements are pictorial division of the picture plane through response to perceptual response, the structural possibility of the grid and the ambiguous problems of reality created by his perceptual response to the 'House' and its reflection in the Gein. The intermediate conclusion that can therefore be drawn is that Mondrian was developing an acute consciousness of the inferences of his own work and those that would influence his progress.

The rivers, landscape and farms to the south of Amsterdam continued to act as the visual source for Mondrian's landscape paintings until 1904, when he moved at the instigation of his friend, Van den Briel, to Brabant. The area south of Amsterdam is polder land intersected by irrigation and drainage ditches, it extends inland

towards Utrecht and southwards past Leiden and Den Haag to Rotterdam and the Delta region, planted in clumps along the banks of the main waterways, into which the smaller ditches flow or are pumped, are clumps of trees. These are often to be seen in the proximity of buildings, such as farmhouses, forming windbreaks. In 1903 Mondrian was drawn to clumps of these trees known as pollard willows and a whole series of works based on this theme ensued, all of these clumps came from sites found along the banks of the Gein and its tributaries.

This group of works was again executed in a number of media, oil paint, watercolour and charcoal. But apart from this the closely packed trees and Mondrian's pictorial depiction of them led him to execute a series of works that have a general all over dark tonality and complexity of secondary structure. The main structural device is the verticality of trees, in fact this element became monumental as in 'Willows' 1902/04, see diagram 4 for the structural device in this work. In it the foremost willow divides the picture plane in an angular dynamic direction, whilst the trees depicted behind repeat the intensity of the closely viewed object. This same compositional device re-occurs in all of the works of this period. In the drawing discussed above Mondrian used the media of charcoal in a direct positive manner, tone was built up through the use of crisp, direct vertical strokes and in this way he created an all over surface continuity in which the structural device is carefully integrated to achieve the drawing's monumental quality. In the painting called 'Pollard willow' 1903, the same structure and all over surface treatment is present, the paint was not applied in the same linear stroke method, but was related to the tactility of paint and property of brush. Material properties of paint and the process of application were at this stage in Mondrian's development becoming highly important issues.



A relationship of this concept of picture plane tactility to precedents can be found in the Barbizon school and the work of Monet. For example in the Barbizon school the same tactility of surface caused by the direct use of media, can be found in works by Diaz, such as 'Tempete', in which he used a very heavy paint impasto. The compositional structure of this painting is very simple. (See diagram no. 5). The direct visual impact of this work is of complexity whilst its structural reality is complete simplicity. This same structural simplicity hidden in a complexity of paint surface can be seen in the works of Charles Daubigny 'La lune argentee', (see diagram no. 6.) Theodore Rousseau and Jean Millet developed the use of the hatched line in charcoal to an all over surface quality.<sup>(9)</sup> Mondrian in the Willow Tree series of works applied himself to the same problem in various media and his experiments resulted in this powerful series of paintings and drawings, especially the two considered above. This series of work he carried out between 1902 and 1904.

(4) During the period when Mondrian was working on the willow series of works he went with his friend, Albert van den Briel, during August 1903, on a visit to Brabant. Although Mondrian's painting was progressing satisfactorily he was deeply troubled by religious doubts, he had for some years been discussing Theosophy with his brothers and with Van den Briel whom he met in 1898, the two men were to remain lifelong friends. Mondrian's main religious problem appears to have been centred around a long personal struggle to find a substitute for the domineering deterministic traditional Calvinism adhered to by his father. The initial visit to Brabant in August with Van den Briel, Seuphor records as being significant in that it offered an area of countryside dominated by two factors, simple farming people whose religious values resided in Roman Catholicism, no doubt seen by Mondrian as the antithesis to Calvinism, which had



gained a dominant social status in the Netherlands, taking a stand of extreme conservatism and reaction. In January 1904 Mondrian was able to move from Amsterdam to Uden, a village in eastern Brabant. His friend, Van den Briel, had been appointed as a forester to the region. It was significant that Mondrian chose to live isolated from the Amsterdam milieu at this time with only Van den Briel for a contactable friendship. This must surely emphasise the significance of the role Van den Briel played in the dialogue the two men conducted into religious problems.

The people of the Brabant area, being primarily Roman Catholics, had a considerable effect upon Mondrian, to the extent that he seriously considered being converted to the Roman Catholic faith. The simplicity and rudimentary quality of the farmers' lifestyle had a positive influence upon Mondrian's subsequent theoretical development.

The move itself took Mondrian away from the Amsterdam milieu into a social situation in which he could evaluate the whole oeuvre of his work in all its nuances. During this sojourn in the country Mondrian visited Ossental, south of Tilburg.

The quality of this period of change was recorded by Van de Briel and quoted in Seuphor's book. The quotation is so descriptive that I shall here transcribe it in its entirety from Seuphor's book<sup>(10)</sup>:

It was then that one saw Piet in the act of transforming himself. I had work to do on the land, but I always came back to Uden for the weekend, and I would bring provisions; the bread made by the peasants, which Piet was very fond of, ham etc. We spent a good deal of our time among the peasants, chatting and playing cards. They knew only our first names. This period had a great influence on Piet. It was here, at Uden, that the real Mondrian was born. I have in mind mainly his behaviour towards others. A human contact as close as the one which linked him to these almost primitive beings, whose character was so open, and who were deeply religious, would have been impossible in the city. At least that is what Piet thought. The crust around the inner man is so thick there, he used to say. When finally he had too many visits from Amsterdam - people who just came to pass the time and who prevented him from working - he left the place. His direct relations with people who were not artists were never again to be as they were in Brabant. I recollect that in Paris he continually changed his baker and grocer, in order to remain



a stranger in the places where he shopped. But in an inner sense, and among his friends, Piet always remained the man he became during his days in Brabant.

There were other visits made by Mondrian, but all of these appear to have been in the company of fellow artists, for instance his visit with Simon Maris to Spain and England in 1901 had no recognisable influence on the development of his work. By this visit in 1907 to the area of Oele, the district of Twente of Overijssel, with Albert Hulshoff Pol did result in a number of important paintings, but these came about after the formative period in Uden.

In the paintings and drawings prior to 1904 an element of introspective study had begun to make its presence felt, for Mondrian had begun to examine the problems of pictorial structure based upon perceptive response to nature, he had begun to discover through multiple influences the beginnings of a personal artistic commitment. As Van den Briel implies the period of transition at Uden allowed these tentative beginnings to take conscious form.

The word content is often used in an attempt to describe the qualities of communication that an art object transmits to the viewer. Content, if it can be identified, exists as the subjective force in an artist's activity and being subjective, an interaction between conscious idea and subconscious stimulus it becomes almost impossible to analyse in an objective manner. But Van den Briel implies that it was at this point in Mondrian's evolution that he discovered, even if in a rudimentary way, the nature of the general content with which his life's work would be concerned. Not only did he make this discovery he began to answer the questions about religion that had beset him for so long, the answers to these questions based as they were in subjectivism became completely interrelated with his artistic/painterly discoveries. Van den Briel records that their contact was so close to the people of Brabant; because the people, the farmers lacked urban veneer, but possessed

a deeply religious belief. What he implies is that Mondrian and he experienced the raw essentials of the human condition, they exposed themselves to a relative reality. It was a reality that Mondrian throughout his life attempted to maintain and to examine the inferences of.

In considering the paintings prior to 1904 the idea that they evolved through a dialectical process was posited, the period that is here being discussed confirms this idea in as much that the Roman Catholicism of the Brabant, containing its symbolism, its ritual and its dogma, acted as the antithesis to the structures of Calvinism. Although the Brabant people provided a release agent for Mondrian the nature of their religious beliefs did not provide an answer; this he began to find in what I consider to be the synthesis of the dialectic process, Theosophy which provided a chance for Mondrian to maintain his deeply held religious feelings with a freedom of personal introspection. He later became dissatisfied with many of the so-called Theosophic actions of many of the society's members and withdrew into his own religious reality.

The paintings of this period in Brabant are dually expressive of these subjective discoveries and of the simplicity of the agricultural quality of the people's lives. The large farm buildings with their vast roofs are in fact complexes of cattle shed, cattle food storage and farm house. Mondrian's farmyard paintings are expressive of the closely interactive relationship of the farmer to his land and animals. The interiors give an acutely conscious feeling of the humbleness of the living quarters of these farms, even the paint quality and handling has an expressive directness in concomitance with the observed subject. See 'Brabant farmyard'.

The formal pictorial experiments and development of this period are most significant, ideas that had been touched upon were given



very deep consideration. The processes used and developed were as before oil, watercolour, pencil and charcoal. This period is most significant in Mondrian's experiments with pictorial structure. In for example the very beautiful watercolour, 'Farmhouse at Nistlerode', Mondrian divided the whole into three main areas, the upper sky area and the ground area, together add up to the area of the central section, the mass of the building, see diagram no. 7. The whole was then subdivided according to perceptual responses, see diagram no. 8. The finished work thus depicts the farm building but at the same time is a synthesis of Mondrian's search for hidden structural order and perceptual observation, this synthesis is further heightened by his use of colour, for, he used a palette that is fundamentally unnatural, i.e. did not comply with the colour responses of perception. The palette is in fact the palette of the period 1914 and the Luminist period of 1907, the colour is therefore symbolic it was applied though with the same technical application as that seen previously in such works as 'Landscape with ditch', or 'Forest'. There were some sketches made during this period 1904 that emphasise Mondrian's involvement with 'pictorial' structures, they are most significant as they show rectangular relationships, empirically derived, extending across the total surface of the picture plane.

The sketch from which the structure of the 'Farm at Nistlerode' was derived is 'Sketch for farm at Nistlerode', the second of these 'Sketch for barns at Nistlerode', once again shows an overall division of the picture plane. In both instances the major axis is horizontal. This no doubt was due to the nature of the barns, but it can be seen that rectangular planes were placed in such a way as to balance one another, for example in the second sketch the rectangles in horizontal axis on the left side were balanced against the vertical rectangles on the right-hand side. In both instances the rectangles were connected to the proposed edge of the work. In

the painting made in oil these elements were blocked in with a direct tactile application of paint, see 'Barns at Nistlerode'.

The pictorial experiment of these two paintings and their related sketches was continued in drawings and paintings of other objects around the farms of Brabant. For example in 'Cows in a shed' the whole surface area was divided into rectangular vertical subdivisions, the measurements of these are important to note for although they do not bear any intentional direct relationship to a mathematical series, Mondrian's subdivisions provided him with a symmetrical composition, one that contains the horizontal directions of the two cows in pictorial balance, see diagram no.8.

The two works 'Farmyard with cattle and willows' and 'The white calf', one made in charcoal, the other in water, are considerably more complex than any of the works so far considered in this period. In these two works Mondrian included the use of repoussoir elements, the willow trees, which are of course reminiscent of the willow tree series which preceded his move to Uden. These two works are very descriptive of the mood of the scene and can of course be viewed purely for their bucolic romanticism, but the contributing factor to the peaceful presence of these woods is the underlying pictorial structure. Although the repoussoir willows emphasise recessionary space, it is the surface division of these works that determines the balanced peacefulness, see diagram no. 9 and no. 10. The rectangular divisions and subdivisions create a contained harmony, vertical thrust was balanced through use of horizontal subdivisions, again the measurements do not follow any predetermined schema, but were no doubt derived from perceptual response, as the two aforementioned sketches and finished works demonstrated. Also during this stay at Uden, Mondrian painted in water colour a windmill, the presence of this mill is emphasised in its monumental relationship to the countryside. The brush work,



like that used in all his watercolours and oil paintings, is basically an impressionist handling of media. The mill, as Robert Welsh<sup>(11)</sup> pointed out played a central role in village life, for not only did these mills pump water they were used to grind grain. The symbolism of these monumental forms thus had a social significance parallel to that of the monumentality of the village churches. Their scale though is related to necessary functionalism, in the polders they controlled the water levels and thus made agricultural life possible. The role of the mill is thus central to the pursuit of a life based upon agriculture, their multiplicity of social roles is therefore symbolised in their monumental presence in the landscape.

This work of 1904 exemplifies Mondrian's recognition of the social symbolism of the windmill. When considered in terms of its formal structure the composition of the work bears a close relationship to other objects that Mondrian painted at a later date, 'Church at Domburg', 'Lighthouse Westkapelle' and the single flower studies. This subject of monumental symbolism will be considered in chronological sequence, the importance of the windmill considered here is that it forms a link in general symbolic terms with the works 'Reformed church Winterswijk' 1898, 'Chrysanthemum' 1901, and a very early work, 'Church seen from the rear' 1892.

There was in Mondrian's development, as is becoming increasingly obvious, a cyclic process that operated in his development of various themes, and as these cycles operate they feed over, or interacted with one another. Graph no. 1 demonstrates the manner in which these cycles occur and then the time at which they were concluded.

In the early spring of 1905 Mondrian returned to Amsterdam from Uden. He returned with a commitment to compositional balance, which in terms of its general inference was to form the basis of his luminist, cubist, and later his neo-plastic paintings. Naturalistic

illusionism had become the vehicle for these compositional experiments and in fact natural source material was to remain until the 1914-1915 period when Mondrian carried out the 'Pier and ocean series'. The other change that had taken place was the introduction and experiment with the subjective palette employed in 'Farm at Nistlerode'. Underlying all this vitally important period of pictorial experiment was the developing synthesis of the problem of religion for Mondrian and its relationship to his work as an artist. Many of the works executed at Brabant, both in the Uden area and at Ossental, south of Tilburg, see 'Study of cows' 1904, were exhibited on Mondrian's return to Amsterdam.

(5) The experimental nature that formed the basis of Mondrian's subsequent development had by the time of his return to Amsterdam been firmly established. It was based in empiricism, which can be divided into the following subjects sources. Geographic location, e.g. the area of Brabant, pictorial structural experiment through perceptual reaction, and technical experiment with paint. The combination of these elements can thus be termed analysis and experiment with symbolism and pictorial formalism. The introspective nature of Mondrian's personality had led him into a search for religious values, ones that held a greater reality than those of his Calvinist upbringing. It was from the complexity of this area of introspective analysis that the later symbolism of his neo plastic work was to evolve. The mediative nature of Mondrian's development can thus be seen as the complex issue of his teleological relationship with the universe. This issue he had chosen to consider through the discipline of art. There are of course many precedents for this form of pursuit to be found in painting, for instance Theodore Rousseau's so called return to nature in the forest of Fontainbleu was not motivated solely by a desire to confront nature for purposes of pictorial expression, it was motivated by the dual



role of personal introspection, and a desire to return painting to simple ordinary understanding of life as expressed in the greatest of seventeenth century painting.

Rousseau's aim was to find real values and to expressively symbolise them in his paintings. This aim was the fundamental conceptual basis of Jacob Israels and other such independent artists who found that the erudition of academic landscape art was false in terms of its expression of real values. Mondrian was quite obviously aware of this division, and it is important to note that he understood it in relation to the divisions that existed in what has been termed Romanticism, the movement that has been seen as the stimulus to the independent artist, which it certainly was. But Romanticism divided itself, in all its many aspects, those of philosophy, literature, politics, and the visual arts, into schisms of influence. It was identified with personal introspection and individual responsibility and with collective identity and the ethical implications of that stance.

The analytical experiment with which Mondrian was concerned can be understood as being both subjective and objective, and that the testing of hypothesis was through empirical methods.

Apart from a few digressions for commercial reasons, or for reasons of friendship<sup>(12)</sup>, Mondrian worked on themes stimulated by geographic location. The next major stimulus was found in the polder area to the south of Amsterdam at Duivendrecht, which is on the Amstel river. The objects of his paintings centred around what is known as the 'Farmhouse at Duivendrecht'. This very famous series of paintings and drawings examined all the major themes so far posited, testing them once again against observed reality. The works are descriptive of the relationship of the farms of this area of the Netherlands, to the water ways. The need for tree protection and the openness of the landscape, the mood of the life

style is expressed in the architectural presence of the farms. Mondrian's drawings and paintings although being greatly concerned with these expressive problems also continued to examine the formal pictorial elements that he had previously established. In for example 'Farm at Duivendrecht' 1905/06, watercolour on paper, it can be seen that Mondrian gave more emphasis to the reflection of the farm than could have been observed, this same subjective emphasis can be seen more clearly in the charcoal drawing of the same subject, 1905, which is apparently observed from a point closer to the waters edge but on the same sight line as the watercolour. It can be seen that the building, in fact in all of this series of studies, changes in horizontal proportion, although the viewpoint remains relatively the same. In the charcoal study the reflection of the trees creates the same sort of vertical rectangular format as in 'Cows in shed' 1904. Mondrian also experimented with differing proportions of rectangle in terms of the overall pictorial format. Here are five versions of the same object, numbered one to five in chronological order.

1.	Farm at Duivendrecht 1905	Charcoal	46. 3-60 cms
2.	Farm at Duivendrecht 1905/06	Watercolour	50-65. 5 cms
3.	Farm at Duivendrecht 1906	Pencil	12-22 cms
4.	Farm at Duivendrecht 1906	Oil	46-59 cms
5.	Farm at Duivendrecht 1906/7	Charcoal/ Crayon/ Gouache	43-76 cms

Numbers 1, 2 and 4 have a similar rectangular ratio whilst 3 and 5 have a similar ratio. The second of these gives the finished work a more panoramic pictorial presence. In every work Mondrian has changed his viewpoint not only in apparent horizontal position but consequently in terms of vertical position, see numbers 1 and 5 for example. This series of works can therefore be understood as an experiment with composition to determine the most expressive



format and internal construction of the stimulant source coupled with the pictorial elements that had previously been identified as being significant to Mondrian's work. In 1916 he painted as a commission another version of 'Farm at Duivendrecht', see illustration. In it all the elements of the series of 1905-7 are present together with a synthesis of later works such as 'The red tree' of 1908. But the version of 1916 like those of earlier period incorporates an element that Mondrian continually experimented with during this period that of pictorial perspective space. In a work of the same year as the main series 'Evening landscape with cows' perspective pictorial space is almost non-existent, there are only the most rudimentary pieces of information to suggest space and those are really based upon the idea embodied in the title and the consequent interpretation of the work by the viewer, whilst in all of the 'Farm at Duivendrecht' series perspective space is carefully constructed to a vanishing point on the right-hand side of the pictorial plane.

The compositional structure of 'Evening landscape' is basically horizontal in axis, the canvas being divided into three horizontal rectangular bands, nothing in the landscape provides a vertical axis and thus an element around which illusionistic space can be perceptually constructed. But the role of the vertical element is not as the above comment implies, as Mondrian demonstrates in 'Trees along the Gein' 1905/6, in which the vertical reflections of the trees in the water, was painted with a pictorial equivalence to the actual trees but one that destroyed the illusionistic space. Emphasis was given to the ambiguities of reality mentioned previously. What is not any longer ambiguous is the manner in which the perceptive record of these trees has caused a definite division of the picture plane into vertical subdivisions which are centrally intersected by

two horizontal bands. The canvas thus has three horizontal bands subdivided by nine vertical rectangular planes, but the practical planes are totally concomitant with the horizontal, because they are constructed out of the horizontal planes.

Not only did Mondrian's perception of reflection cause him to flatten pictorial space, as demonstrated above it introduced another element. In the sketch 'Farm with trees and water' 1906, the trees forming the wind break are curved across their tops, this element is repeated in reflective form at the bottom of the drawings, it is unclear as to whether the reflection was in water, therefore observed or was purely pictorial invention. I am inclined to the second possibility, for Mondrian does seem to have distorted the possible perceptions of the reflections as has been shown in 'Farm at Duivendrecht'. The pictorial element that he created here is oval in form and it, see diagram no. 11a, continues to reappear in a number of works during the year 1906, as does the structural rectangular division caused by reflective ambiguity. See 'Along the Amstel' 1906 and diagram no. 12 'House among trees on a river' 1906, and diagram no. 13. In diagram no. 11b the ovoid was set in vertical axis this was tried simply because that during the time I was studying these actual drawings I carried out the same experiment upon this drawing, it made no significant difference therefore suggesting that the structure and not the perceived object was of more significance to Mondrian. I therefore think that it is possible that during the years from 1904 to 1907 he began to be conscious of a dichotomy appearing in his work, one between subjectivism and objectivism.

But the subjective inferences that I have suggested could have been gained from the works just discussed, did not form the prime basis for the next stage of Mondrian's development. The reason for this is I think to be found in the idea of context, for the inferences that I can so easily see are the result of the personal



knowledge of Abstract Art. Mondrian's struggle to achieve this position had not in the period 1906/7 taken any really positive steps. Although as has been demonstrated, certain elements that were to form a part of the structural basis for his concept of abstract art had been established. The context of art in the period 1906/7 in Amsterdam was still firmly based in the influences of the Hague/Amsterdam schools and also the developing force of 'Symbolism', which could be seen in the work of Mathius Maris, Toorop and Thorn Prikker<sup>(13)</sup>. The next major stage in the evolution of Mondrian's art was then still rooted firmly in landscape subject matter, meaning that he still painted from the stimulus of his perceptual responses, his artistic relationships were still with the objective visual world and its interpretation. The farm at Duivendrecht series of paintings was followed or overlapped with another important series, these resulted from his visits to the polder areas drained by the rivers Gein and Amstel and from a visit to the area he called 'Oele' in Twente, see map. His return to Amsterdam in 1905 had allowed him to renew his friendship with Simon Maris and with Albert Hulshoff Pol it was with the second of these friends that Mondrian travelled to Twente.

(6) The theme of this major series of works, in various media, was the 'Evening landscape'. This term has been called in relation to the history of Dutch painting 'Nocturn'<sup>(14)</sup>, and is descriptive of a whole body of painting that can be traced back to the masters of seventeenth century Dutch painting, such men as Aert van der Neer. Its history, particularly in relation to Mondrian can then be traced through the Barbizon School, in the works by such artists as Daubigny, Dupres and Millet<sup>(15)</sup>. It of course appears in the paintings of the Hague School, for example H.W. Mesdag or J.H. Weissenbruch<sup>(16)</sup>. Mondrian's development of this theme was highly significant and the works he produced must be considered amongst

the outstanding examples of the interpretation of this theme. The beginnings of Mondrian's contribution began in 1905 with a number of paintings of windmills at dusk, see 'Windmill' 1905-06.

The mood established in these works is one of stillness and calm, the mills are imposing and monumental. Their placement in the paintings is such that their vertical nature breaks up into subdivisions the horizontal bands that form the general axis of these paintings, for example 'Windmill' is divided into five bands, water, land, and sky in horizontal axis, these are subdivided by the mill which is placed almost centrally. thus symmetrically balancing one portion of sky against the other, whilst the vertical thrust of the mill is balanced by the downward thrust of its shadow across the water, the stretch of light that horizontally divides the canvas between the top and bottom is arrested in its horizontal drive again through reflection upon the water, which as a horizontal strip is divided into four sections. A similar form of compositional structuralism as that used earlier by Mondrian can thus be seen. It was a structuralism developed from perceptual determination and a developing awareness of a concept of pictorial structuralism.

The other major important formal element and it was the additional one to the experiment with structure was the observation of the distinctive lighting condition of evening and night landscape. The concentration upon this particular time element was truly in keeping with Theodore Rousseau's idea of the notion of time and the perception of observed reality. It continued as a theme into Impressionism and of course there are many examples in the Hague School. Mondrian's contribution to this theme can be seen as the culmination of the theme in Dutch nineteenth and twentieth century painting. In 1908 he painted 'Woods near Oele', a painting that signalled a whole change in his work and in my view can be seen as epitomising the beginnings of the enormous change that Dutch art underwent in the following years.



Mondrian's visit in 1906 with Hulshoff Pol to Twente resulted in some truly magnificent works in the theme of evening landscapes. There is a drawing in the collection of the Gemeente Museum, Den Haag, called 'Woods at Oele' 1906. It is a large drawing, in fact one of the largest that Mondrian ever executed being 111 x 67 cms. It is a drawing that has a solemn, peaceful, monumental mood, light filters through the trunks of the trees. The vertical thrust of the trees is given greater dynamism through the diagonal sweep of two trees that consequently create a vertical spatial band moving from right to left across the composition. This work is reminiscent of Mondrian's first recorded work 'Woods with stream' 1888 and with the diagonal dynamism of the charcoal drawings 'Pollard willows' 1902/04. The drawing 'Woods at Oele' was made in chalk on paper, in technical handling it has much in common with Millet's use of the same material.

Mondrian's technical use of paint and drawing media was throughout the period of his development of landscape closely related to that used by the Impressionists, the Barbizon, and other 'independent' artists, which included of course the Hague and Amsterdam Schools.

In terms of paint usage, that is oil paint, Mondrian painted a major landscape evening scene in 1906/7, it is called 'Pond near Saasveld'. The composition of this painting and indeed its size and scale has much in common with the works of Daubigny. Mondrian divided the canvas into two four-sided figures having equal area, one of trees and water, the other of sky. See the reproductions and diagrams numbers 13 and 14 of Daubigny's paintings and the reproduction of Mondrian's painting. The area balance of Mondrian's magnificent painting is further enhanced through the balance of light tone and dark tone of each area, and of colour balance, the bottom being primarily green, the top yellow green. The manner in which the sky is painted, where blue green stripes are set next to warm yellow stripes is a carefully considered synthesis of observed

reality, dusk at Saasveld pond and painterly concept.

The romantic symbolism of the whole body of these evening and moonlight series of works is very powerful. They were based on an interpretation of one set of physical conditions and all that those conditions imply. The point in time at which these conditions alter the presence of landscape to a quality of calm peacefulness. It is a time when detailed observable reality is no longer of any significance, a time when all the constituent elements in the landscape achieve an equivalence. Mondrian's conception of this perceptual condition is such that his work achieved the necessary symbolism. The constituent parts of the symbols, the tonal and colour values, the undetailed but monumental mills connecting water, earth and sky and the farm buildings blending into the landscape are all balanced one with another to achieve all over pictorial unity.

The painting called 'Summer night' is remarkably expressive of the misty ephemeral qualities of such a scene, and as its working study shows, it is an objective view of the particular place. It was therefore the choice of colour and the painting's carefully controlled tonality that enabled Mondrian to achieve its symbolic value. This element, the symbolic value of colour and of tone, was another important factor in Mondrian's painterly experiments during this period, coupled with the symbolism of tone and colour, is of course the application of the media. These three elements form the basis of the formal experiments in the whole evening landscape series. The experiment with the symbolism of marks can be found in all the works and in all the various media that Mondrian employed during the period in which he painted the nocturns.

In 1907 Mondrian executed a drawing called 'Solitary tree'. This study was for the painting of the same year called 'Solitary tree in a landscape'. The drawing was concerned with the all over compositional relationship of the various forms. Taken on its own the forms do not convey information about specific objects, they



simply define areas and record tonal change. The spatial element that is created cannot be perceived through the recognition of perspective information but purely through the interaction of gradations of grey. These same elements were translated into the painting with one main exception. The sky was painted in contrasting tones which created a cloud formation similar but more textural than that in the 'Great landscape', thus creating perspective pictorial space. There were in fact two other bodies of works of major significance painted during this year. The first of these was the series of landscapes with clouds as the main theme, culminating in the painting 'Red cloud'. The second series is one that continued into 1908, and can be called generally 'Trees along the Gein' which culminated in 'Trees on the Gein: moonrise'. Both these series must be considered for they contain the very obvious pointers towards Mondrian's transition in 'Woods near Oele'.

The studies for 'Red cloud' are as can be seen in Cor Blok's Piet Mondrian catalogue 1974, three, there are two oil sketches and a crayon sketch called 'Landscape near Oele' <sup>(17)</sup>. This drawing has much in common with the study for 'Solitary tree' except that it contains more information about the observed reality of the actual landscape, the two curving lines act as perspective indicators, the painting 'Red cloud' unlike the painting 'Solitary tree' achieves the same qualities as those in the 'study for solitary tree'. But also it sets a real precedent in terms of colour, it is not a nocturn but rather more suggestive of a point in the daily cycle, where the sun has set but the landscape still remains in sharp focus as the sketch shows. This Mondrian ignored by leaving the land mass very loosely worked, but he gave great opacity to the blue of sky, such that it becomes a blue surface, which is perceived on the picture plane, the red of the cloud exists exactly on the same tactile surface. Mondrian balanced the area of the colours and the colour values, coupled with the opacity of the paint and its handling :

to achieve this effect. The perceptual stimulated mood is here tested against the symbolic subjectivism of colour alone, an inference gained from such drawings as 'Solitary tree' or a painting such as 'Evening landscape with cows' 1906.

(7) The second series that preoccupied Mondrian during this period was 'Trees along the Gein'. The first of this series of paintings, executed in 1906/7 was closely associated with the other evening landscape of the same period, but like other paintings of the same setting such as that painted in 1901/04 'Trees on the Gein', it contained the element of reflection and all that that element implies. There are a number of versions of this subject but the one that appeared to have held the most significance for Mondrian was the version in which the trees were contained in the centre of the canvas and were parallel to the picture plane, thus illusionistic perspective space was diminished. The 1907/08 versions of this series can be split into two, culminating in 'Trees along the Gein' 1908, and 'Trees on the Gein: moonrise'. The studies for each of these works embodied the compositional structural elements that can be seen in each of the finished works, 'Trees along the Gein', the finished version, demonstrates the slow tentative explorations that Mondrian continually made. In it he introduced intense reds and blues, the colours are not those of the observed scene, but those of subjective experimental choice, as in the 'Red cloud' of the previous year. But the painting also contains brown and greens of observed reality attesting to the tentativeness of Mondrian's painterly development. The handling is of course, as is the colour, closely related to the painterly techniques current in France during the years just prior to this work. The sky is divided up into the small areas through the use of small areas of blue, split up with streaks of yellow, this technique was the forerunner of Mondrian's luminist contribution.

The second part of this series 'Trees on the Gein:moonrise' is



somewhat different, they were painted in warm browns, similar in colour to that used in 'Summer night' 1906/07, but the paint was opaque. The ephemeral quality of 'Summer night' does not exist. The colouration of the canvas was such that a quality of brownness dominates with a small use of tonal range, three in total it was a simple direct statement, one that was symbolically expressive of the scene, interpreting it, but also concentrating upon the overall pictorial unity implied in such drawings as 'Farm with trees and water' 1906. The nature of illusionistic reality was the question that Mondrian was in this painting once again asking. The symbolism of romantic perceptual mood had diminished as the subject matter as it did in the paintings 'Red cloud' and 'Trees along the Gein'. The symbolism of colour itself was beginning to be tested.

In the drawing called 'Trees along the Gein by moonlight', the vertical division of the picture plane is overtly obvious as diagram number 14 shows, the horizontal band of the river bank divides the rectangle in a ratio of 2:1. This near precise division of the picture plane Mondrian carried over into the painting. The painting incorporates a peculiar illusion, caused by the use of this division of the picture plane, for the moon is placed on the central point of the picture plane in both the drawing and the canvas, but the proportionate differences cause it to be seen as being lower to the bottom than to the top. He achieved thereby a combination of symmetry and asymmetry of compositional relationships.

During this intense period of landscape painting, Mondrian had, as has been indicated earlier, been intensely involved with a study of Theosophy. Van den Briel records that in the earliest years of their friendship that Mondrian had been most enthusiastic about Edouard Schuré's book 'The great initiates'<sup>(18)</sup>. There can be no doubt that Mondrian continued to read available Theosophic tracts, for during this period the Theosophic society published a great number of books including works by its founder such as 'The

secret doctrine', and 'Isis unveiled'. The general theories of Theosophy must have caused for Mondrian problems though, for on the one hand it is obvious that his development as a painter was through the process of empiricism, whilst the theories of Theosophy contradicted the validity of this process as well as the process of logical reasoning, claiming that significant data could only be gained by way of intuition or through the revelations of the initiated. The issue must have seemed most complex for much of the theoretical stance of Theosophy at the turn of the century was supported by what were the results of empirical science and philosophy<sup>(19)</sup>. The Theosophists can be seen as being independents in their relationship to the established church. If this can be accepted then it is understandable why it was that Theosophy and other 'independent' religious groups played an important role in the foundations of twentieth century art. For example, at the same time that Mondrian was developing his involvement with Theosophy so was Wassily Kandinsky, whose interest lay especially in the writings and teaching of Rudolf Steiner<sup>(20)</sup>.

One proof of the validity of Theosophic teaching that could have struck Mondrian, was that of life being a continuum, with reincarnation as its evolutionary method. In the teachings of the founders of modern Theosophy this process was taught in the terms that what the individual gained resulted from previous action. This concept was central to Theosophy and could have provided an intellectual bedrock for the process of development that Mondrian recognised as occurring in his work during this period.

The impact of the general nature of this form of thought, the belief in the stimulus of the intuition, had brought into being, coupled with other factors of reaction, the movement that came to be called 'Symbolism'. This movement centred itself to begin with in France, it was a result of the very general concept of Romanticism, specifically it was a reaction to that form of Romanticism that I



have termed romantic realism. The type I consider the Barbizon School to have been concerned with. The influence of Symbolism could be found in literature, the visual arts, politics, and of course religion. Its influence spread northwards through Belgium to the Netherlands. In the visual arts this came about through such artists as Toorop and Thorn Prikker being connected with the Belgium society of Libre Esthetique<sup>(21)</sup>, and Mathius Maris's interest in German mystical painting.

The influence of these two interconnected forces, Theosophy and Symbolism, as recognisable in style and symbol, can be seen in Mondrian's works of circa 1900, in the years 1907 to 1909 there was an intensification of this activity in his painting and drawing. The images used are three flowers, self portraits, and quasi-portraits of women.

There is a link between the landscape work and the single flower theme as can be seen in 'Tree' 1908. The image is of a single tree, in fact the image appears to be more of a leaf than a tree. The technique of painting this image was such that the spatial element was almost nil, the surface treatment was in linear flowing movements and definite blocks of paint which surround the image. The technique has much in common with that used by Vincent van Gogh whose work was beginning during this period to have a deep impact upon the art world of the Netherlands<sup>(22)</sup>. But the other possible symbolism of these flowing lines exists in the ideas of Theosophy, which stress the two aspects of man the visible and the invisible<sup>(23)</sup>. In Theosophy colour and linear graphics symbolise motive forces. In living beings the invisible can be seen and recorded by the initiated. The possibility that this could be the symbolic meaning of the paint technique in this series of Mondrian's work is further supported by a drawing called 'Printemps' 1908, in which the flower-like female image is surrounded by lines drawn with the same quality as those defining the figure, thus stressing the relationship of her

being with its environment and vice versa, the second example of this is 'Devotion' 1908, an oil painting, the handling of paint in this work was similar to that used in 'Tree'. The colour used is mainly red, which in Theosophic terms represents pride, whether this was Mondrian's intention is unclear. But the unpraised eyes and the flower symbolise thoughts of purity or a seeking of purity.

The influences, other than those received directly from Theosophy, would have come from Jan Toorop and Thorn Prikker. The drawing made by Toorop simply called 'sketch' is quite obviously concerned with the sort of symbolism that Mondrian became concerned with. Mondrian's direct contacts with Toorop began about 1908 when Mondrian commenced his yearly visits to Domburg, a village in Zeeland where Toorop worked surrounded by a number of artists interested in the ideas he was pursuing. He, Toorop and Thorn Prikker held at that time the prominent position in the Netherlands in terms of the development in painting of Symbolism.

(8) In 1908 Mondrian painted what is regarded as one of his major symbolist works, called the 'Passion flower', it was an obvious precedent for his large work of 1911 'Evolution'. The woman with her upturned head and closed eyes was symbolised as seeking purity and relate to the use of the flower symbol in Hinduism and Buddhism. The flower designs used by Mondrian in the 'Passion flower' were almost the six pointed symbol of the Theosophic Society that he used in 'Evolution'. The Theosophic symbols meaning is that 'there is no religion higher than truth'. 'Passion flower' was executed in watercolour, the surface is flat and therefore contains none of the symbolic force line that can be seen in 'Devotion' and in the flower paintings of this period. The flowers were all concerned with expression of the life cycle, that Mondrian had come to understand through his Theosophic studies.



The composition of the flowers was basically the same, the flowers were placed diagonally across the vertical rectangles, see 'Chrysanthemum' 1908, and diagram number 14. Whilst the compositional basis of the 'Passion flower' was central and symmetrical, see diagram number 15. Presumably the differing compositional placements also contain symbolic value related directly to the overall symbolism of the image. There is one further point that needs to be made in relation to the compositional centrality of 'Passion flower', and that is the similarity that its placement has with the placement of the 'Windmill' painting made in 1907 which was also a part of the evening landscape series. The mill's monumental presence and centrality related it to the presence of 'Passion flower' and consequently to later works.

There were three 'self portraits' made during the years 1908-11. They were executed from a front view of the face from varying distances. The first includes an area that would show the shoulders, the second the face only, and the third the eyes, part of the nose, cheekbones, and forehead. They were all made in charcoal and all but the faces were in a deep black/grey. The faces were modelled in greys. The possible symbolism of these works relates either to Mondrian's obsession with his eyes or with his Theosophic readings in which he would have found reference to the brow or frontal chakra<sup>(24)</sup> which was said to exist in the space between the eyebrows, this form of belief came directly from the influence of Indian mystical teaching into the teachings of the Theosophy Society. It is interesting to note that all the works just discussed came into being immediately before Mondrian's decision to become a member of the Theosophical Society.

Mondrian's development during this period of primarily landscape painting was meditative and tentative, he accepted the influences of academism, and of Romanticism, his techniques varied but showed the strong influence of Breitner in the use of oil paint whilst his

choice of landscape subject remained more influenced by the Hague School than the Amsterdam School. His evolutionary development of compositional structure during this period can be seen to have been continually clarified and refined. In each step that was made the dialecticism of his progress can be seen.

The position that he had established for himself as an artist in the Netherlands was by this time quite considerable if not very remunerative. During the next few years this position was to alter in that he rapidly became established as one of the leaders of art in the Netherlands. The changes that brought this about can be traced into the work here discussed, but they also were the result of other influences, which again fulfilled 'the third world categories' posited as the basis for Mondrian's evolution of artistic knowledge.



Footnotes - Chapter 4

1. A painting of near Tachist abstraction.
2. 1857 to 1923.
3. 1857 to 1924.
4. The two museums that constitute the Rijksmuseum, Mesdag, Den Haag contain major works by the Barbizon School and the Hague School. Such men as H.W. Mesdag who came from 'well to do', Dutch families collected the work of the Barbizon and other French painters.
5. Canal bridge, watercolour on blue paper, dated by Robert Welsh 1898. See for details Robert Welsh's notes Mondrian catalogue 1966.
6. Ibid. page 46.
7. Ibid.
8. 1939 to 1917.
9. Mondrian is known to have visited the Mesdag collection of French painting.
10. M. Seuphor. Piet Mondrian. Abrams New York 1956. p.53.
11. Op cit, see n8 p.62.
12. Mondrian occasionally painted portraits and such things at the request of friends.
13. Symbolism, like Romanticism, is a complex subject and the term in the context of art only refers to a recognisable stylistic quality.
14. Wolfgang Stechow: 'Dutch Landscape painting in the 17th century'. Pb by Phaidon 1972.
15. Nocturn or evening landscapes by all of these artists can be seen at the Mesdag Museum, Den Haag.

16. Michel Seuphor records that Mondrian would have access to this remarkable collection. Seuphor op cit, see n 12, pp.45 and 60.
17. Piet Mondrian; een catalogus van zijn werk in Nederlands openbaar bezit, Cor Blok page 114 to 118.
18. Op cit, see n 18 p.53.
19. Annie Besant and C.W. Leadbetter: 'Thought Forms'. Pb Theosophical Publishing House Madras 1901.
20. Sixten Ringbom: 'The Sounding Cosmos', Abo Akademi 1970
21. B. Loojsses-Terpstra, 'Moderne Kunst in Nederland: 1910-1914'. Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, Utrecht 1968.
22. Ibid.
23. C.W. Leadbetter: 'Man visible and invisible'. Pb by the Theosophical Publishing House, Madras 1902.
24. C.W. Leadbetter: 'The Chakras'. Pb by the Tehosophical Publishing House, Madras 1927.



Chapter 5. The years in which Mondrian's transition began,  
1908-11.

Subchapters: (1) 'Woods near Oele', and the European artistic  
climate.

(2) The influence of Jan Toorop and the impact  
of Post Impressionist painting.

(3) The impact of Vincent van Gogh and Paul Cézanne.

(4) Mondrian's evolution through 'the Genesis of  
Modernism', and the Amsterdam milieu.

(5) Mondrian's activities at Domburg and other  
landscape paintings, the influence and his  
experiments with Post Impressionist colour  
and symbolist theories, 1908-11.

(6) The two sides of Mondrian's experiments with  
symbolism.

(7) Footnotes.

## Chapter 5

(1) The year 1908 is highly significant in the development of Mondrian's work, for it was the year in which he painted the canvas, 'Woods near Oele'. It is often and correctly cited as the painting that marked his transition from an artist whose work was concerned with perceptually based art to an art based on conceptual stimulus. But it was not only in this painting that his transition took place, the painting is symptomatic of the beginnings of a change in his whole intellectual outlook, without this change the painting would not have come into being as the significant work that it is. These next paragraphs will attempt to demonstrate the nature and context of this change.

The painting, 'Woods near Oele', must then be understood within the context of the paintings that preceded it and those that came directly after it. In addition this work must also be understood and related to the climate of the current Dutch art and consequently to the climate of Western European art.

Some of the paintings that acted as the direct precedents for this painting have been previously discussed, paintings such as, 'Red Cloud', 'Trees along the Gein' and 'Trees on the Gein by moonlight'. In discussing these works the significance of the nocturnal subject matter was considered. There are those who consider that 'Woods near Oele', falls into the same category<sup>(1)</sup>, but this misses the point of calling 'Woods near Oele', symptomatic of Mondrian's transition, for the trees and the landscape in, 'Woods near Oele', are nothing but a vehicle for expression. The scene is not an impression of twilight filtering through trees or across a pond such as can be seen in 'Pond at Saasveld'.

The change that took place, if only tenuously at this time, was in Mondrian's evolving understanding of two basic notions, those of subject and object coupled with the interaction of perception and



conception. In the painting, 'Pond at Saasveld', the subject and the object were both identified in Mondrian's perceptual response to the impression he gained of the effect of dusk seen across the pond, which is consequently an impressionistic painting rather than an expressionistic work, as is 'Woods near Oele'. In the painting, 'Trees along the Gein' Mondrian's choice of palette no longer revolved around decisions made directly from perceptual responses but rather from intellectual reasoning and subjective motivation. The subject of, 'Trees along the Gein', was the colour and the technique; the view of the trees, water and the sky served only as manipulable objects of subjective interpretation, as did the trees, the time and the land surface in, 'Woods near Oele'. The abstract quality of the expression through colour and mark is to a certain extent damaged by the images that are not entirely synthesised in this painting, this problem formed one of Mondrian's major concerns during the next few years. The composition of 'Trees along the Gein' is very close to many previous paintings of similar views, the use of colour although mainly of a synthetic palette employs colour that could have been perceptually stimulated, the brush work is complicated as the sky was painted in a loose pointillist manner whilst the tree trunks and the water were treated in a, 'fauvist', linear brushwork manner, the technique used in, 'Woods near Oele', with complete success.

The manner in which Mondrian applied paint was almost gestural. Some historians have suggested that this canvas is related in terms of its precedents to the Fauves and to Edvard Munch. Other sources of influence with whom Mondrian was, at this time, in personal contact, were Jan Toorop and Mondrian's contemporary, Jan Sluyters. His contact with these artists took place in Amsterdam and at Domburg, a village on the island of Walcheren in Zeeland. It was in this village that an artistic community grew up around Jan Toorop, the significance of this group was highly important to the development of Modern Dutch art, especially between the years 1910 to 1914<sup>(2)</sup>:

It was there, as well as in Amsterdam, that Mondrian first came into contact with the ideas on art that were disseminating from Paris and other parts of Europe.

In 1894 Jan Toorop visited Brussels to see the exhibition of, 'Les XX', it was there that he came into direct contact with the renaissance of French Impressionism. 'Les XX', had been founded in 1884 by a number of Belgian artists who agreed upon their dissatisfaction with their official salon which adhered to the same general academic policy that had been contested by artists in France during the earlier part of the century, artists such as the Barbizon School and the Impressionists. The dissatisfied Belgian artists appointed as the secretary of, 'Les XX', Octave Maas, a lawyer with a deep interest in contemporary art. The exhibition policy adopted by, 'Les XX', was to mount exhibitions which included the work of twenty Belgian artists with the invited participation of twenty foreign artists, the policy was also to exhibit work that had, 'avant garde', significance. Thus in 1884, the invited foreign artists included work by Josef Israels, Jacob Maris and Anton Mauve from the Netherlands. In 1891, 'Les XX', extended invitations to Van Gogh, Seurat, Gauguin and Pissaro. During the previous year three canvases by Cézanne had been exhibited and during 1887 Seurat had exhibited work with Camille Pissaro at, 'Les XX'.

Octave Maas was also concerned in the founding of the magazine, 'L'art modern', an influential magazine which had as its Parisian correspondent, the eminent symbolist critic and commentator, Felix Feneon<sup>(3)</sup>. Thus through the founders of, 'Les XX', a strong influential link was formed between the Belgian and Dutch artists with the powerful generating forces of the foundations of the new art in France. It was a movement that not only changed the direction of painting, but one that had an enormous influence on literature, architecture and politics. The underlying structure of this new movement was based on a new set of values, which were in turn based



on older French and German philosophic idealism, particularly that of Hegel, Fichte, Kant and Schopenhauer. The proclaimed values of the movement were antipositivist and antinaturalistic. They took literary form in the two important magazines, 'La revue independents' and 'La vogue'. The notion was posited that painting should move towards transcendental idealism, an art of ideas and fantasy, one that would replace naturalism. Thus a battle front was constructed as a reaction to the influence and the premises of Impressionism. Even the objectivity and empiricism of such men as Hemholtz, Maxwell and Rood, whose work had seminal influence upon sections of this movement, did not exert an objective influence in the general sense. The work of these scientists was used to develop the subjective element in symbolist painting. Of considerable importance in this development was the mathematician and symbolist theorist, Charles Henry, whose studies and propositions were influential upon the work of Seurat and Signac, for he led them, especially Seurat, towards an understanding and use of symbolist psychological theories of colour and line.

Art, therefore, was to be an expression of metaphysical ideas. In the whole intellectual milieu of Paris during this period, there were numerous societies of pantheistic religious belief, the Rosicrucians, the Theosophists, and the Spiritualists. These groups, as can be gathered from the writings of Madame Blavatsky, researched deeply into the esoteric doctrines of ancient and mystical religions, supporting the evidence of their studies with modern empiric scientific data and theory.

Not only were the tendencies of the new art opposed to the theory of Impressionism, there were divisions, quite naturally, between the various groupings of developing symbolism, symbolism in the sense that the very important critic and theorist, Albert Aurier, defined it. He rose to prominence in the latter part of

and clarifying the theories of symbolism. As Loevgren records, Aurier paraphrased Schopenhauer's metaphysics, relating them to the developing art. This paraphrase concerned Schopenhauer's thesis on the relative existence of objects.

'In nature each object is in short, only an idea signified.' Loevgren, himself, interprets this conclusion in the following manner. 'For the idealistic artist therefore, the surrounding world was transformed into a mystic, but remarkably expressive combination of lines, planes, shades and colours, with the help of which he could depict ideas, dreams and thoughts.'<sup>(4)</sup>

In the context of the influential intellectual climate that was in Mondrian's case to result in his transitional painting, 'Woods near Oele', two more quotations from the writings of Albert Aurier, to clarify the theoretical description of this climate<sup>(5)</sup>.

The work of art is the translation, into a special and natural language of a spiritual gift of variable value, at least it is a fragment of the artists spirituality, at most, his entire spirituality, plus the spiritual essence of various objective beings. The complete work of art is thus a new being, one may actually say a living thing, since there is a soul to animate it, which is even the synthesis of two souls, the soul of the artist and the soul of nature - I almost wrote the paternal and maternal souls.

The implications of this theoretical position have quite obviously direct associations with the theories set down by Mondrian in his jotted notes in the 'Two sketch books' , notes in which he began to construct his theoretical propositions.

(2) In 1870 Jan Toorop had been working in France, his painting was then based within the idiom of, 'plein air', painting as was the work of Thorn Prikker, the other Dutch artist who assimilated, at an early stage, the ideas of symbolist art and with Toorop brought this influence to the Netherlands. It was these two artists who led the movement of change in the early years of the twentieth century in Dutch painting. Toorop's main influence was in terms of his divisionist paintings which brought into being the Amsterdam Luminist School of Painting. Whilst the change that took place in Thorn



Prikker's painting was the result of the influence of those French symbolists who explored the fantastic, he also explored the ideas of divisionist painting with the use of a swirling linear technique. There were also produced by Toorop in the fantastic idiom, see 'The Sphinx' 1892/97. In fact during the years leading up to the turn of the century, Toorop worked in these two idioms simultaneously, that of chromoluministic divisionism and linear decorative fantastic symbolism. Of a note is taken of the dates of Toorop's work at the Gemeente Museum, The Hague, the following list should clarify this point.

J.T.H. Toorop Linear decorative fantastic symbolism

The sphinx' 1892/97

Amsterdam Breitner School of Impressionism

'The arrest' 1885

Chromoluminist divisionism

'Bulb fields by Oegstgeest' 1885

Chromoluminist divisionism

'The worker, the woodcutter' 1905

Chromoluminist divisionism

'Dunes and sea at Zoutelande' 1907

During the whole period from 1885 to 1910 Toorop worked in a number of styles, but the most important were chromoluminist divisionism and linear decorative fantastic symbolism. He also made portraits and expressionist works in the manner of Die Brucke. The inconsistency that occurs in Toorop's work is that of working in the styles of the two sides of symbolism at the same time. Toorop's seminal importance to the development of Amsterdam Luminism cannot be denied. But it was in fact his stylistic inconsistency that made it possible for his influence to be so diverse, and made it possible for Amsterdam Luminism to become the unique school of painting it became under Mondrian and Jan Sluyters. Toorop's work as a painter,

related artistic ideas to the most important streams of contemporary European artistic thought. His paintings relate to Science and the symbolism of Charles Henry and to the symbolism in art motivated by the growth of esoteric religious cults, such as the Rosicrucians.<sup>(6)</sup> These groups propagated mystical historic subjectivism as opposed to the influence of the then current objectivism of science and the perceptually based premises of Impressionism and its forerunner the School of Barbizon.

The two other major forces, in the development of the symbolist movement, as defined by Aurier, were of course Paul Gauguin and the Pont Aven group, and Vincent Van Gogh.

In a letter to Theo, Vincent<sup>(7)</sup> wrote about the development of his real artistic purpose, that of painterly expressionism, he wrote:

'and I should not be surprised if the Impressionists soon find fault with my way of painting, which has been fertilised by the ideas of Delacroix rather than theirs. Because instead of trying to reproduce exactly what I have before my eyes, I use colour more arbitrarily, so as to express myself vigorously.' Van Gogh had in the simplest terms, expressed the fundamental motivation of his work as a painter, also he had described the expressive force that became one of the aspects of the synthesis of artistic influence that formed the basis from which Amsterdam Luminism and Mondrian's Luminist contribution, as seen in 'Woods near Oele', developed.

Post Impressionism was not simply a group of painters whose works evolved out of Impressionism, it was deeply rooted in a vast area of complex but historically traceable theories and as the basic premise of this dissertation is to examine the relationship between the practice and the theory in Mondrian's work, the theories and their sources that either directly or indirectly motivated his whole oeuvre must be taken into account.



It is through the process of art historic research and reflection that the work of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Seurat has come to be linked together as forming the general basis of the major aspect of symbolist art. It is a well documented fact<sup>(9)</sup> that Gauguin disapproved vitriolically of Seurat's science based divisionist approach to the use of colour. Van Gogh on the other hand took a considerable interest in Seurat's work, whilst pursuing his own very personal subjective expressionism.

Both Gauguin and Van Gogh became very conscious and interested in the paintings and prints of the Orient then to be seen in Paris. Gauguin's interests centred even more particularly upon the art of the islands of the Pacific and Indian Oceans. In the art from those islands, Gauguin discerned the undisguised naturalness, an element that he found and introduced into his paintings. In a very general manner this direct naturalness is what Van Gogh sought and captured in his paintings during his sojourn in Provence.

Gauguin's emphasis on cerebral art and his attack on naturalism is echoed in many of the statements made later by Mondrian. Both men attacked in their writings and their painting the, 'sensual', in art, in fact the exclusion of the sensual became one of Mondrian's basic premises. Where Van Gogh and Gauguin differed was in Van Gogh's acknowledgement of the importance of the Barbizon School whose work being, 'lein air', acknowledged the sensual element. This disagreement was fundamental and distinguishes the differences in the art of the two men.

Gauguin rejected this attitude and drew on subjects that had an obvious religious basis or stressed the metaphysical side of man's relationship with the universe. The form of symbolism pursued by Gauguin and Bernard is not apparent in either the work of Van Gogh or of Seurat. But this did not deter Bernard from persuading the critic Aurier to write an article on Van Gogh's painting. Albert Aurier accepted the challenge to write about Van Gogh, who in his

view, attempted to express in words; the nature of subjectivism as it is experienced in moods. Aurier's article on Van Gogh was published in the Mercure de France<sup>(10)</sup> and it contained the following revealing phrases which are an acutely descriptive statement of Van Gogh's uniqueness.

Indeed, independently of that undefinable aroma of good faith and of things really seen which all his pictures exhale, his choice of subjects, the constant harmony of the most excessive colours, the honesty in the study of characters, the continual search for essential meaning of each object, a thousand significant details unquestionably proclaim his profound and utmost childlike sincerity, his great love of nature and of truth - of his own truth.

Beneath this physical envelope, beneath this very carnal flesh, for those who know how to find it, a thought an idea, and this idea, the essential substratum of the work is also at the same time its efficient and final cause.

This last sentence of Aurier's concerning the essential, 'substratum' of Van Gogh's work is exactly analogous to the writings of Mondrian in which he writes the need to strip away the 'carnal flesh', the fleeting illusion of nature and man's sensual being and through painting to reveal the universal truths to all men and by so doing to enhance their spiritual life, a Utopian idea shared with Van Gogh as Aurier reveals.

The relationship between this Utopian aim and the Utopian ideology as expressed by Mondrian in his writings up to the time of his death is exceedingly close. It is based on the Calvinist ethical principal that man must help his fellow man. Both Van Gogh and Mondrian grew up in Calvinist families, the development of the influence of this Calvinist ethic into an artistic ideology or artistic credo, is consistent with both Van Gogh's and Mondrian's development.

It was then partly from the exhibitions at 'Les XX' in Brussels that of the avant garde French Symbolists began to exert an influence upon the changes that took place in the mainstream of Modern Dutch art at the turn of the century. The other forms of influence came about through artists, such as Toorop and Thorn Prikker



during that time he assimilated the concepts of Neo Impressionism and other aspects of symbolism, that led to his complexity of styles. The ideas with which Toorop was confronted were directly significant to the painterly development that became Amsterdam Luminism.

The simple foundations of chromoluminist divisionist painting were based in the concept termed 'the additive mixture of colour', a system developed from a study of the manner in which coloured light mixes. Additive colour mixture is opposed to subtractive colour mixing, the primary colours of the additive system being red, green and blue/violet whilst those of the subtractive system were red, yellow and blue. Seurat also accepted the fact that the three main properties of colour, or the colour dimensions, were value, hue and intensity.

It is revealing to compare Seurat's chromoluminist technique with that of Toorop. The comparison reveals a misunderstanding or disregard and consequently a misinterpretation of the rules of divisionist technique of painting in Toorop's work. Take for example, his painting 'The woodcutter', 1905, a painting lacking in comparable luminosity and pictorial clarity. Which raises the question of how much of the scientific theoretical basis of divisionism was transmitted via Toorop the Amsterdam luminist movement and how much did Signac actually impart to him?

In 1894 Toorop saw Signac's work in Brussels at, 'Lex XX'. In 1901, Toorop organised an exhibition at the Hague which included paintings by Signac, the year previously Signac had taken up residence in Rotterdam, and as the acknowledged practising propagandist of the Neo Impressionist group there can be no doubt about his influence upon Toorop. The question posed previously reiterated here concerns the content of that influence. Terpstra in her book on the early years of the twentieth century in Dutch art, suggests that Toorop altered the Neo Impressionist dogma towards a more direct expressionism, but then later states that in 1907 his

divisionist paintings became more severe, in other words, his work adhered more to the rules of the additive process. See 'Dunes and sea at Zoutelande', 1907. Again this is hardly a luminist painting when compared even to Signac's later work which in fact did not adhere so closely to the rules. I do not think it correct therefore to say that Toorop altered the Neo Impressionist dogma, except by not understanding it. He certainly was unable to achieve the luminism and symbolism that was the hallmark of Seurat's later paintings.

In 1887-88 Seurat painted another work which explored and encapsulates his search for pictorial luminosity, it is called, 'La parade de cirque', in it he depicted a night scene lit by gas lamps, the composition is once again static and balanced. This he achieved by dividing the canvas equally in vertical axis and in its horizontal axis, which is also subdivided between form, tone and area so as to harmonise it into a cohesive whole, the parts he treated in the same manner as the whole. It is revealing to compare the numerical structuralism of the painting such as this one by Seurat with the purely intuitively rectangular structuralism of Mondrian's landscape studies previously considered. Both artists in their separate manners were beginning to explore the possible pictorial expressive content of rectangular structural subdivision. This property becomes even more obvious in Mondrian's luminist paintings, works such as, 'Church at Zoutelande', 1909. which will be considered later.

The physiological studies of Henry concluded that 'lines or gestures in the direction of weight affirm sadness, the opposite affirms joy'. These Henry schematised on a circular format.<sup>(11)</sup> 'The direction from bottom to top corresponds to pleasure, the direction from top to bottom corresponds to sorrow, movements left to right are agreeable, right to left disagreeable.'

Henry concluded therefore that, 'for every line there is a corresponding colour that is exactly matched to it. Together colour



and directions have intrinsic expressive value.' His view of harmony was that the parts formed a 'consistent and orderly whole', in all the details and implications of the work of art. As Homer records 'Henry believed man's destiny to be the creation of universal harmony.' This is too clear a statement of belief for it to be ignored in relation to the aims of Neo plasticism as proposed a number of years later by Mondrian in De Stijl.

In his final works Seurat attempted to achieve this property of Universal Harmony 'harmony being the analogy of opposites'. The same property was sought for by Gauguin and Van Gogh as was demonstrated earlier. The theory that was at the root of the work of these artists was embedded in the philosophy of the period, that of Schopenhauer and is called 'the theory of correspondences'. For each of these three artists worked to devise pictorial equivalents through which to express their subjective responses directly to the viewer.

(3) Van Gogh's work achieved the same general degree of visual equivalents as Gauguin and Seurat, through his use of painting technique that reduced the pictorial space and gave the material real tactility.

Van Gogh achieved in his work, a luminosity, not of the same specific type as that achieved by Seurat, but of a burning heat radiating from his canvas as can be experienced in front of his painting 'The sower', 1888, a painting with all the elements that Van Gogh wrote about in his letter to Theo, included earlier. It also includes all factors mentioned above. This achievement of luminosity is vitally important as it demonstrates a second but related colour method to the achievement of Seurat's method, but it is a method that allows for more expressive vigorous paint usage, thus two possibilities were established for the developing Amsterdam

Another major figure in the evolving milieu of French painting who must be mentioned in connection with the development of Amsterdam Luminism is Paul Cézanne, who also became dissatisfied with Impressionism during the 1880's. His wish or aim became the expression of the unseen structure that he felt to be implicit in the changing face of nature. In a general sense, Cézanne's theories of art also embraced the theory of correspondencies for he said that 'nature was the essential element, the source of art but one must not reproduce it, one must interpret it. By means of what? By means of plastic equivalents of colour.'

For Cézanne, art was an abstraction as it was for Van Gogh, Gauguin and Seurat and the whole symbolist movement. But in his paintings, Cézanne attempted to discard all traces of psychology and feeling, which was of course in opposition to Seurat's aims in his later paintings.

Cézanne's process of purification concentrated upon developing forms that gave expression to universal values rather than to individual personality or emotion. Cézanne cannot therefore be categorised as a symbolist in the sense in which the symbolist ideology can be said to connect Seurat, Van Gogh and Gauguin. The link between these four men, was in their interpretative aims and their abstract aims. It expresses itself in their individual attitude to and use of colour. Cézanne did not attempt to use colour in the symbolist manner of the other three artists. But at the same time his use of colour was exploratory, for at the root of his theory of colour was his belief in the necessity of its harmony.

Cézanne's work like that of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Seurat thus moved from the accepted Barbizon and Impressionist theory of art to a conceptually based theory of art. His evolution as an artist and the factors that caused this shift, as it was with the other three artists, was of a dialectical nature. A process though that was not necessarily logically perfect. It would appear then that the



dialectical processes that led to the shift from a perceptual approach to a conceptual approach was necessary to the development of each of these artist's work, whilst they still maintained an empiric relationship with nature.

The importance therefore of Cézanne's concept of art to the work of Mondrian is profound, for it was an art that depersonalised the subject, so as to give significance to the unseen universal order and harmony of nature. It was a concept of art that equated drawing with objectified abstraction, something which Mondrian was consciously in the 'two sketchbooks', and, as has been suggested, possibly subconsciously in his earlier impressionist period. Cézanne's believed that harmonic equivalents must be created. This he asserted was the aim of art. Many pictures can be found which exemplify Cézanne's theory of harmonic equivalents, but the painting of 'Montagne Sainte-Victoire', (1904-06) is a fine example of his use of colour and form as pictorial equivalents.

(4) In his evolution as an artist Mondrian therefore had to pass through, in a general sense, the equivalent stages of development which Van Gogh's, Gauguin's, Seurat's and especially Cézanne's went through in their movement from a perceptual approach, that which was basically that accepted by the Hague and Amsterdam Schools of Impressionism, to an understanding and a notion of art that was basically conceptual. In 'Woods near Oele' and 'Trees along the Gein' Mondrian was beginning experiments the stimulants that would lead him through this next stage of his evolution. His period of Amsterdam Luminism passed above, from the apparent symbolic expressionism of 'Woods near Oele' to such a painting as, 'Dune landscape' 1911 which was more concerned with pictorial harmony and plastic equivalents than with the symbolic expressionism of the scene. Mondrian's work had by 1911 split into two kinds of symbolic expressionism. In 1911 he painted 'Evolution' which was the high point and conclusion of his use of 'symbolist' images in the sense

of the literary based symbolism. In colour and technique, however, it has a great deal in common with 'Dune landscape'. The technique in fact being similar to that used by Cézanne on the 'Montagne Sainte-Victorie'. Mondrian's 'Dune landscape' begins to contain a quality of universal harmony and depersonalisation, a quality that was to become one of the hallmarks of his mature oeuvre.

The period in Mondrian's development, from 1908 to the turn of 1912 was spent exploring and experiencing the influences of the artists and the movements that grew up around them and to which they were related. Although Mondrian had as early as 1904 used a synthetic palette, 'Farmyard at Nistlerode', it was not until he painted, 'Woods near Oele', that this change became firmly established it took therefore, four years before Mondrian completely accepted the implications of the palette used in 'Farm at Nistlerode'. As has (12 been pointed out by R. Welsh 'Woods near Oele' has many similarities in its colour scheme and technique to Fauve and pointillist precedents, whilst also embodying a certain quality of art nouveau, he also states that no direct precedent has been found. The link with pointillism or chromoluminism in the sense of Seurat is rather arbitrary, or at least an extremely free interpretation, for the colours used by Mondrian, do not obey the rules of the colour circles adhered to by Seurat. Therefore, it is more likely that Toorop's influence upon Mondrian would have been to convince him to follow the ideas of the new tendencies in painting in a general sense, such as those of chromoluminism.

The colouration of the painting, 'Woods near Oele' has its link with Neo Impressionist Chromatics in that the colours used by Mondrian are purer, they were not totally subtractively used, but were used in a quasi additive manner. The technique of paint application can be related to the Fauves, to Vlammick, Derain and Van Dongen. In addition, the expressionist quality of colour is reminiscent of Munch, but the subject matter does not suggest that



it be categorised with the sort of symbolism with which Munch was concerned, being the world of fantasy and dreams. For as has been made clear, the real basis of Mondrian's evolution was through landscape and this forms the general basis of almost all his work from 1902-12. The exceptions being the drawings, 'teckeningen' and the works leading up to the 'Evolution'. The connecting link between 'Devotion' and 'Passion flower' is the drawing called 'nude', made either in 1908 or 1911. This drawing is obviously the visual source coupled directly with, 'Passion flower' for the 'Evolution'.

To compare, 'Woods near Oele', and his subsequent luminist paintings is to find that they are devoid of the intense feeling of personalised expressionism that Van Gogh put into his work. Although in the case of both artists, the colour used is arbitrary; it did not adhere to strict rules. Mondrian's colour is more synthetic than Van Gogh's who colour, although he does not reproduce what he perceived before his eyes, still retains a semblance of sensible reality. Mondrian's chromatic scale in his luminist period entirely divorces itself from the sensible reality. The reasons for this difference are numerous. Firstly there is the time gap between the two men. Painting in general had in the intervening period become increasingly more abstract. Another important factor is the context within which each man worked, for as is well known, Van Gogh's most advanced paintings were executed in the artistic isolation of Arles and St. Remy. Whilst Mondrian worked in the artistic milieu of Amsterdam and Domburg during the years 1908-12. It is obvious that he was in close contact with the flow of ideas that moved northwards from Paris via Brussels. He no doubt talked with Toorop and the younger well travelled artist, Jan Sluyters and as a member of both art societies in Amsterdam, St. Lucas and Arti, he no doubt saw the work of the French artists as soon as their work permeated into the Netherlands. After leaving Paris this sort of milieu was denied to Van Gogh in all but his correspondence with

his brother and fellow artists.

What appears to have occurred in the Netherlands that which brought the moment of luminism into being was a very considerable shift in the creative climate, one similar to that which developed in Paris during the 1880's and 1890's. In the Netherlands, the change took the same broad form, effecting all the creative and discursive activities.

In the Netherlands influence of French and German Expressionist art continued to exert itself through exhibitions until the beginning of the First World War. It began, with the exhibition organised by Toorop in the Hague in 1901. And not only did the public galleries, such as the Stedelijk, the art societies such as St. Lucas and Pulchri Studio, the private commercial galleries began to exhibit symbolist paintings. In addition they also began to exhibit the work of the young Dutch artists. In fact, the society of St. Lucas played a central role in promoting the new art along with commercial galleries in Amsterdam, The Hague and Rotterdam. The new art was art which showed the influence of symbolic French painting (symbolic is here used instead of symbolist, by way of saying that it was the whole symbolist movement and not just the Metaphysical literary symbolist influence).

The first major manifestation of this phenomena took place in the Spring of 1908 at St. Lucas<sup>(13)</sup>. The styles of painting represented were Impressionist, Neo Impressionist, Nabis and Fauvist. The exhibition was given considerable attention by the critic and artist Conrad Kickert, whose friendship with the developing young Dutch artists and his role of art correspondent for a Dutch journal in Paris was of real importance to the development of the modern movement in the Netherlands and especially Amsterdam. Kickert's columns from Paris began in 1906 when he wrote with great enthusiasm about the work of Van Gogh. That period was the one in which Van



work was shown at the Stedelijk, and in 1908 at C.M. Van Gogh in Amsterdam. It was a period during which all of the important critics began to hold him in high esteem. H.P. Bremmer promoted Van Gogh's art in the Rotterdam papers, whilst Querido wrote in his columns with considerable warmth about the importance of Van Gogh.

Another important critic who was to promote the cause of Modern Dutch art appeared during this period, his name was Plaschaert, in his columns of this period appeared some of his first criticism of Modern Dutch art, of the period in which Jan Sluyters and Mondrian rose to eminent importance.

The recognition of Toorop as one of the important figures who helped to establish the movement of modern art in the Netherlands, began publicly with his exhibition in Amsterdam in 1904. By this time he had worked extensively in the style of divisionism and expressionism, in which he employed the literary based symbolism, he was thus able to exhibit a most influential body of work to his young admirers. His influence upon Jan Sluyters can in fact be traced to the previous year. It appears in Sluyters paintings and no doubt in Toorop's example of visits to Brussels and Paris. For in 1904 Sluyters went with Leo Gestel to Antwerp, then on to Brussels and Paris. Sluyters was also awarded the 'Prix de Rome'. He therefore travelled to Rome to work in the academically acceptable manner, but in 1905 he went to Spain where his work became more expressive in that he began to use line and colour in a manner that was expressive in a symbolic sense. His sojourn in Spain was followed by a trip to Paris in 1906 where two things occurred. He saw Gauguin's work which he found most inspiring, for in it he recognised Gauguin's revolt against tradition and he then himself revolted, abandoning his 'Prix de Rome'.

From this point onwards his work took on the challenges of Modernism. His shift of emphasis therefore predates that of Mondrian's transition for reasons quite obviously relatable to his

travels and assimilation of ideas, which had not by 1906 gained a solid foothold in the climate of art in the Netherlands.

During 1906, Jan Sluyters met in Paris the Dutch artist, Van Dongen. This artist's work and his connection with the Parisian modernist milieu is again an important factor in the development of modernist art in the Netherlands. Van Dongen's work developed through a number of abrupt stylistic stages. He had begun his career, as had most painters of the period, as an impressionist. His work when Sluyters met him had become Fauvist, and he had become associated with that group of post impressionist painters. His work also exhibited traces of the influence of Signac and Cross. In 1905, preceding his forthcoming exhibitions in the Netherlands, an article was published in the Netherlands about his work. It was during this year that he met Vlammick and formed with him, the 'Bateau lavoir' <sup>(14)</sup>. This brought him into contact with the extremes of the Parisian avant garde. In 1906 Van Dongen exhibited his work in the Rotterdam Kunstkring <sup>(15)</sup>. The work shown was Fauvist and employed a palette that was consequently synthetic, for he had like many other artists, discarded the use of realist sensible colours. He exhibited again in the Netherlands during 1907, and also participated in the 'Libre esthetique' in Brussels. <sup>(16)</sup>.

He had met Sluyters in 1906, in 1907 he met Mondrian obviously whilst visiting Holland. What both these young Dutch artists would have seen in his painting, as they had seen in Toorop's, was the influence of Signac's ideas of the effect of light. But of real importance to them was Van Dongen's use of a synthetic palette, a usage that was accepted by Mondrian in 'Woods near Oele', and by Jan Sluyters in, for example, 'Moonlight', 1911. How significant Mondrian's meeting with Van Dongen was is impossible to precisely ascertain, but it does seem to have had the effect of enforcing Mondrian's confidence in his change of palette.



There were other influences that permeated into the Netherlands and affected the climate, such as that of the Belgian Expressionist, Ensor, and the previously mentioned Munch, as well as Hodler and the German Die Brücke Expressionists. But the most predominant influence came from France, as it had done previously. In the Netherlands this influence caused its own unique reaction which came to be known as Luminism or Amsterdam Luminism..

By 1906, the painting of Jan Sluyters had developed a more advanced modern quality than either Toorop or Van Dongen and he was acclaimed as the leader of the Modern Movement in the Netherlands. In 1909 the year of the St. Lucas exhibition he, with Mondrian and Spoor, mounted an exhibition of their work at the Stedelijk. Their work was all Luminist, but Mondrian and Sluyters were acclaimed to be of a higher calibre than Spoor.

Mondrian, during this period, began to play an ever more important role in the promotion of the modern movement. In 1910 he was elected a full member of the St. Lucas selection panel. During this year, he exhibited a group of Luminist paintings that established his reputation as one of the most modern artists in Amsterdam. Therefore in the Netherlands, during the December of that same year, due to a disagreement with the older members of St. Lucas, Mondrian helped Conrad Kickert found the Moderne Kunstkring and served with Jan Sluyters and Jan Toorop on the governing committee.

By 1911, with the triumph of the Luminist painters in the St. Lucas exhibition held in the Stedelijk Museum, the movement was firmly established as the avant garde of the Dutch art. In this exhibition, Mondrian's work was acknowledged as the most radical in its modernness. His work along with that of Sluyters and Jacoba Van Hemskerk was then exhibited in Brussels at the Musée Modern.<sup>(17)</sup>

(5) Some of Mondrian's major paintings of this period centered around subjects that he found around Domburg during his summer visits which, as has been recorded began in 1908.

In 1908 Mondrian painted a group of three paintings called 'Haystacks' numbered one, two and three. These three paintings take the period of the day just prior to the complete setting of the sun, the point and time and time and light conditions after it has set and a third which is set later in the evening. What is important in these three canvases in terms on Mondrian's subsequent evolution, is the manner in which he has placed the haystacks in two of the paintings, for in these two paintings, one of the stacks tests the edge of the canvas and is intersected by one of the vertical edges. This gives a feeling of a fleeting moment. It was a device used earlier by Degas in some of his paintings and later it was used by Mondrian, but divorced from the sensible timescale, in such works as 'Composition with yellow lines' 1933, in which the lines defining a square placed in the lozenge project the complete square beyond the edges of the canvas. This device can be found in many of Mondrian's Neo plastic paintings and is in fact extremely significant to his development of the real tactile reality of the picture plane. It is the same sort of general evolutionary link that has been discussed in preceding sections of this study.

The technique of paint used in the 'Haystacks' (1908) demonstrates Mondrian's growing awareness of divisionist technique and his experiment with a very loose form of divisionism, one that distinguishes his Luminism from Seurat's exacting technique.

The time cycle of the 'Haystack' group of paintings has of course, a link with many of Mondrian's paintings of 1906/07. Works such as, 'Pond near Saasveld' to, 'Red cloud', and to the drawing, 'Farm in the evening'. The other relationship with earlier paintings was in the choice of subject and position of viewer and artist to the subject, Mondrian used a shifted specific position whilst maintaining the same general view point. This technique was, as described earlier, used in the series, 'Farm at Duivendrecht'. What distinguishes the 'Haystack' group is the intentional time link



of each of the three paintings one to another, and of course the loose divisionist paint technique. The last point that needs to be made about this group of paintings is in connection with their compositional and colour relationship with the paintings of 1904, 'Farm at Nistlerode'. For the manner which that painting was divided into loosely constructed rectangular divisions is similar to that used by Mondrian in, 'Haystack'.

The next important paintings in Mondrian's development were the two paintings of 'Windmills in sunlight'. Paintings that explored the burning intensity of sunlight, for the mills appear to have a luminous veil of heat between the viewer and the mills themselves. This intense luminosity Mondrian achieved through the use of the three primary pigment colours, red, yellow and blue, these primaries are not though the primaries of the light spectrum and additive process of colour mixing, which are red, blue and green, rather they are those of pigment mixing of colour and the subtractive process of colour mixing. They are of course also the three colours with which Mondrian was to work for the rest of his career as a painter. But in the painting of the 'Mills', Mondrian applied the colours in an additive manner. His luminist painting, as these two paintings demonstrate, did not develop in strict accordance with the laws of the theory of chromoluminist colour mixing, but with a partial observance of those laws.

Mondrian in these paintings employed random shapes for his chromoluminist technique, as in the sky which he painted with yellow and blue patches, the mill itself being painted in red and blue, whilst the land surface was painted with red and yellow stripes<sup>(18)</sup>, and strokes as was the mill. Two further colours were introduced but they resulted from subtractive mixing, the gunwall of the boat in the foreground is described with a green, a colour produced by mixing yellow and blue, as on the door and the fence. The second colour mixture introduced subtractively was a

violet, a mixture of red and blue, Mondrian used it in a few areas on the mill as shadow and in the foreground. With these imprecise means Mondrian produced one of the characteristics of Seurat's luminist painting technique, as can be seen in 'Une baignade Asinieres', which appears to have at a certain point a veil of shimmering damp heat.

The, 'Mills' relate as do the 'Haystacks', to a sensible temporal experience of place, time and atmospheric condition. But interpreted in terms of loosely applied nineteenth century colour theory, they can be understood as paintings of formal pictorial harmony. Two techniques in Mondrian's development of luminism can be recognised at this stage. They are interpretative use of objective colour theory and expressionist linear colouration as exemplified in, 'Woods near Oele' whilst the, 'Mills' and the, 'Haystacks' interpretatively explore a more objective use of the knowledge that had disseminated to Mondrian.

To explain this a little further, in the, 'Woods near Oele', he employed colour in the 'new sense' to express a subject which although observable as a wood is not expressive of temporality in anything like the way, 'Haystacks', and the, 'Mills'.

The next important group of paintings are the single tree series. This group forms a significant part of Mondrian's transitional painting both in the context of the period under consideration and in terms of his Cubist period. The theme of the single tree is also traceable back to the period 1902/04 and is also analogous to Mondrian's single flower theme. But it was in the period 1908-14 that the subject of the single tree gained its eminent position. During the period 1908 to 1910 there are seven recorded works in this theme<sup>(19)</sup>. The most famous of this series being the finished oil painting, 'Red tree' 1908. The other six versions are drawings and sketches, and again as in the, 'Haystacks', they depict the artist changing his position of view, whilst still retaining the



same general frontal placement see 'Tree', 'The blue tree', and, 'The red tree'. The dating of these works is in fact complicated, for the two sketches appear to have been made after the finished painting, 'The red tree'. This is I think open to question for if the previous group, 'The mills' are considered it can be seen that there is a working drawing<sup>(20)</sup>. This study predicted some of the marks that Mondrian used in the two final oil paintings, the stripes with which the mill was painted and the ground he drew in the sketch in a similar manner. In the drawing the marks on the ground were used to describe the space observed and to record this space. The drawing has a traditional, foreground, midground, made up of the mill and a background the horizon line. In the painting the technique and colour diminishes the spatial depth with the intention of increasing the luminosity and expressive effects.

It therefore seems reasonable to suggest that the chronology of the tree series should commence with the drawings and colour sketches rather than with the finished tree or at least those drawings that were made in traditional media of drawing are the forerunners of the painting. The expressive quality that Mondrian achieved in the 'Blue trees', there are two versions, could antedate, 'The red tree'. This whole group of seven works can be understood, in formal terms, as having been an experiment, a testing, by Mondrian of space, of the expressive use of line and colour and the use of the picture plane. It was consequently a testing of the interaction of objectivity and subjectivity. An attempt will now be made to trace this methodical process through six of these works, giving the prefix a - g to each work.

(A) 'Tree', a drawing of a tree that places the tree in the midground thus creating space from the picture plane's nearest point, the bottom edge of the working surface, to the tree trunk's point of connection with the ground behind that point is the background, the horizon. Mondrian drew this tree very objectively, as he did the

sketch of the mill just previously discussed. The spatial dimension of this work can thus be read as consisting of three elements, foreground, midground and background.

(B) In this drawing the trunk of the tree was placed on the bottom edge of the working surface, the top branches, as in (A), touch the top edge. But the element of pictorial space in this second work has been considerably flattened. Two spatial elements rather than three exist in this work. It would also appear that this drawing could have been an abstraction from (A) for in it Mondrian simplified the natural complexity of the observed branches whilst he introduced flowing expressive lines as the edges of forms, the sort of lines that he translated into paint in the final version, 'Red tree'. In (B) the process of abstraction and simplification of the branches brought into being another spatial element, that of the ambiguity of figure and field relationships. The space between the branches became forms, thus the branches became lines outlining forms and the lines, the edges of the branches also enclose forms. Given that all drawing is in fact a process of abstraction, the version, (B) has more of a subjectivist abstracted quality than that which can be perceived in (A).

The development of this quality was the concern of (C) 'Blue tree' and (D) 'The blue tree'. Although in each of these the placement of the tree is as in (A). Closely viewed these three versions also have within them a developing process of abstraction, from perceptual space, to a sense of expressive space. For in (C), Mondrian adhered to the foreground, midground and background scheme. But this element he visually reduced through the technique of brushwork, which is free and expressive, using one applied colour, blue and the ochre of the card on which the work was painted forms the second colour. The element of a figure field relationship Mondrian established through these limited means. In, (D) he further reduced the element of perceivable perspective space, he



rather concentrated his efforts upon the expressive use of marks to create pictorial energy all over the surface. Pictorial energy is one of the distinguishing features of Van Gogh's work, it can also be found in the later painting of Thorn Prikker whose influence upon the young painters in the Netherlands during this period, whilst not being as strong as Toorop's was of considerable importance. Surface energy can be interpreted as the visualisation of the hidden, the unseen, forces of nature. If it is understood in this manner then the relationship of Mondrian's developing abstract expressiveness can be seen against the subjective expressive search of the whole symbolist movement, in all its aspects as referred to previously.

In (E), this aspect was developed further through the introduction of a luminous aura around the tree, in addition Mondrian introduced flowing lines in downward curve balancing the lines that he placed in an upward curve. Thereby he brought into being the problem of pictorial harmony based on a process of abstraction. Mondrian had then in these three study versions brought into being the idea of pictorial dynamics of subjective expression, this development led him to discard illusionistic pictorial space. (F) 'Blue tree', an oil version linking (E) and (G) 'Red tree'.

In the very beautiful oil painting (G), 'Red tree', all of the elements discovered by Mondrian in this process of abstraction were combined together. Once again this painting was not painted in accordance with the strict laws of additive colour mixing for the mixture than can be seen are both subtractive and additive. There are red blues and blue reds, the result of palette mixing. Whilst these colours were used additively in stripes to depict the trunk and the branches. The spatial element Mondrian diminished to almost the ambiguous physiological element of figure field relationships. The only concession made to possible ground surface was made in the use of patches of red/orange and purple, but these continue in the

top area, formerly the sky. This work like, 'Woods near Oele' has no specific temporal time scale, for as he continued with this process of abstraction through the drawings and the 'teckeningen' the element of specific temporality diminished. Thereby the specific in Mondrian's work diminished in favour of the universal and the subjectively expressive.

The search for painterly expression in the sense of the subjectivist qualities of the trees was also pursued by Mondrian in a work based on another pre-tried theme, 'Evening landscape'. In terms of even Mondrian's loosely contrived chromoluminist technique, this painting has hardly any technical connections with luminism at all. What it does possess though, is all the elements discussed in relation to spatial exploration of the negation of pictorial space, as has been traced in the tree series. The brush work used on this canvas is more closely connected to Mondrian's paintings of 1898, 'Woman with child in front of farmhouse', 'House on the Gein', 1900 and, 'Winter landscape', 1907-08. The colour is intense, but this Mondrian achieved through subtractive colour mixing process, but its colour values are similar to that which can be seen in, 'Red cloud'.

One of the really identifiable Walcheren subjects is the series based on the, 'Lighthouse at Westkapelle', this series began in 1908. This theme continued Mondrian's depiction of monumental vertical forms in landscape discussed previously. The tower of this lighthouse stands out against, in dark tones, the pink white of the sky. The composition is very simple being based on an inverted, 'T', form. The canvas was divided into three similar sized rectangular vertical areas. The sky being made up of impasto areas of white pink were broken up by linear contrasting colours into solid flat cloud forms. These forms diminish as individual entities as the sky areas meet the very low horizon line, thus giving a secondary shallow triangular structure to the canvas. Due to this transition



from a broken but solid sky shaped area to an unbroken sky over the horizon, the painting has an ambiguous spatial content, for the triangular recession was not made overtly obvious. There is also a close relationship between the sky in this painting and that depicted in, 'Pond near Saasveld', 1906/07, in which the broken evening sky tunnels backwards to an unbroken surface at the horizon.

The lighthouse was painted with long sinuous strokes such as those used by Mondrian on 'Woods near Oele', there was little attempt to actually give real mass to the tower for its base looks to be flat, whilst its top, due to the two lines of angular projection, provide a key to the angle of the towers perception, which is in fact, oblique. The nature of the sky and the quality of 'contrejour' assure the viewer that this scene was based on an experience of the lighthouse close to dusk, a time when the sky breaks up and clouds are edged with colour, as is frequently to be seen during the early autumn. This painting is expressive and symbolic in the same general sense as Van Gogh's painting, 'The sower' in both is expression of temporality and universal content.

During the following year Mondrian executed at least four versions of the same lighthouse. They were all worked from the same oblique view of the tower. It is my opinion that they are again sequential as the trees were. Criticism can of course be levelled against the ideas of sequential shuffling of the groups I am using. On the grounds that the sequences devised are too rational, too logical and that Mondrian wasn't so painstaking. My reply would be that if his work up to that date and again later (espeically the New York series) is taken into account, the process of abstracting, clarifying and resolving every implication, whether by acceptance or by refutation, was Mondrian's working method. To carry out this method a sequential relationship was necessary. An earlier example of this can be seen in 'Trees on the Gein', which culminates with the three works, 'Trees on the Gein', 'Moonrise'

1907/08, drawing, 'Trees on the Gein moonrise', painting and, 'Trees along the Gein', 1907/08, for which there was a painted precedent in 1906. Again then I shall prefix the paintings of the tower with the letters (a) to (d) in the order in which I consider them to have been painted.

(a) 'Lighthouse at Westkapelle' 1909.

A relatively precise ink and gouache drawing on paper. This drawing has many details of windows, fences, gates and building materials. It has no details of light conditions. It is therefore comparable to the tradition of architectural sketching. This was, I think, Mondrian's intention for the same drawing technique was used in a study of the church at Domburg, a work to be discussed soon.

(b) 'Lighthouse at Westkapelle', 1909/10.

This oil painting is an abstraction from the plein air ink study, although it shows some of the architectural details these Mondrian diminished in visual significance for the sake of vertical monumentality. The tower is in this version light in value against a dark sky.

(c) This version continues the process of abstraction, but it has more the quality of an underpainting or oilsketch working study, one in which expressive qualities were further explored. The tower, as in the painting of 1908, began to lose its oblique solidity as seen in (a) and (b). Other details were diminished and the space created is considerably less than in (a) or (b). But once again the time element was established, that of approaching night after the sun has actually set.

(d) 'Lighthouse at Westkapelle', 1909/10.

In this group of paintings this one is the most complete, in that the process of abstraction and the process of pictorial harmony, of harmonising the tower and its surrounding space was taken further than in any of the other previous works. This painting also bears



a closer relationship to the tenets of luminism for on it Mondrian employed a loose divisionist method of painting, but once again the colours were in many instances, mixed subtractively rather than being mixed according to the rules of additive colour mixing. For example, the patches of pink/purple on the tower itself are subtractive mixes. What is important to note though are the orange patches around the tower, these seem to emphasise the idea of irradiation, stressed by Chevreul and indeed used by Delacroix and later of course by Seurat and other Neo Impressionist painters. The spatial element, so obviously used in (a), Mondrian discarded, for where the sky area becomes the earth area, tonality and colour intensity changes take place, but the marks used to put on the colour remain the same, thus complete pictorial unity results. Even with its faults and misuse of colour theories, this painting is a highly luminous painting.

---

Subjects selected from around Domburg continued to dominate the subject matter of Mondrian's painting during the years 1909 to 1910. Another group of works other than the ink study previously mentioned is, 'Church at Domburg', 1909, followed by a loosely worked atmospheric oil study. There are two further versions of church towers but not of the same tower, one is of the Domburg tower, the other of the, 'Church at Zoutelande', 1909/10. The first of these is in fact from another view than the previously mentioned loose study and seems to have resulted from the ink drawing. The manner in which Mondrian applied the paint gave it a denser more abstract quality than in the other version.

The, 'Church at Zoutelande', is an intensely bright painting, similar to, 'Windmill in sunlight'. The two colours that pre-dominate, are orange/yellow and blue. These colours in fact are correct when considered in terms of Rood's contrast diagram, published in his 'Theories scientifique des couleurs' (32) . It can,

therefore, be presumed that Mondrian was completely aware of the additive theory of colour mixing that formed the basis of Seurat's chromoluminism. For on this church he uses a mixture of line/stripe and patches of colour contrasts to describe shadows. This painting is possibly the finest example of Mondrian's close use of the influence of the rules of Neo Impressionism and it demonstrates his real involvement with the major trends of the period, as the symbolism of 'Woods at Oele', demonstrated his involvement with another but relatable trend.

Mondrian painted another version of the, 'Church at Domburg', which was begun in 1910, but it is different from the works just discussed and forms a link between certain aspects of them and his final luminist paintings, the, 'Dune landscapes', and the, 'Red mill'.

Another theme that Mondrian worked on during this period was the single flower theme, mentioned previously in relation to the life cycle of the, 'Chrysanthemum', (painted and drawn in 1908). Mondrian had begun his single flower theme in 1900 and subsequently in each phase of his evolution up to 1922, testing it against his major formal preoccupations. In 1909 he worked on three versions, a drawing, 'Aronskelk', charcoal on paper in which he used charcoal to achieve a linear quality, as in 'Woods near Oele', or, 'Blue tree'. From this study he made a painting which is really a version of the flower in divisionist technique. The third work was again a painting. Though consisting of two arum lily flower heads, the composition is basically the same as the other two. The space is shallow and the flower is therefore close to the picture plane, as it is in both the other versions. In this version, Mondrian in fact used the linear style of the drawing and that which can be seen in, 'Sunflower' 1907/08 and in, 'Devotion'. It is therefore most likely to have been concerned with the symbolism of similar subjects as those of the, 'Sunflower', and 'Chrysanthemum', series, the life and death cycle. It is then, obvious that the undercurrent of Mondrian's religious



preoccupations were continuing to develop along with his more purely painterly concerns.

Numerically, flowers form a large part of Mondrian's output during the years 1909 and 1910. There are in the public collections in the Netherlands,<sup>(22)</sup> five studies of chrysanthemums, four studies of catstails, one rose, one lily, a tiger lily and a large coloured chalk study of a rhododendron. The study of the tiger lily lead to a delightful water colour painting of a tiger lily which demonstrates Mondrian's ability to apply his complete understanding of various techniques to the production of a very saleable object. It was purchased from the exhibition at St. Lucas in 1910 where it was exhibited<sup>(23)</sup>. All that will be said in conclusion here is that these flower studies are a truly excellent example of Mondrian's very real, traditionally based, high degree of drawing ability.

In 1908 Mondrian started up a theme of work that was to play a highly significant subject role in his final evolution into the universal principles of Neo Plasticism. He began now this thematic series with a small oil sketch, 'Sea and sky', in which the rectangle is simply divided with an almost imperceptible horizon line due to the close tonal range of the paint. There is no staffage or architecture to be seen. The precedence for this totally simple rudimentary composition can be traced back through Mondrian's work to paintings that have an overtly obvious link such as, 'Evening landscape with cows', 1905/06, previously discussed, to, 'Landscape' 1907. An indirect compositional link can be seen in, 'Red cloud', and many of the works, 'Trees along the Gein'. What links all these works together is the artist's and the viewer's postional relationship to both the picture plane and the horizon lines which are parallel. This relationship is one of  $90^{\circ}$  in the horizontal axis. An historical connection with this essential frontal view point can of course be traced to the painters of the Barbizon, but more importantly to the later part of Dutch seventeenth century

landscape painting. This period in which, as Wolfgang Stechow points out, the horizon line's pictorial relationship to the sky was in the order of, 2-1, as can be seen in some of Jacob van Ruisdael's paintings. Besides the relationship of sky to earth, the other significant factor that links Mondrian's landscapes to the traditions of Dutch landscape is the lack of the compositional device of reposoir. The technique of this sketch in terms of Mondrian's technical preoccupation during this period, that of pointillist influences, is out of keeping apparently. For on this sketch he used paint brushed on in a similar manner to the sort of paint technique that he employed on a number of canvases during his Hague School period. But as stated above it was purely a sketch and its significance is not in its quality of painting but in that it forms a link in the evolution of Mondrian's work.

In the collection of Mondrian's paintings in the Gemeente Museum, The Hague, are a number of sea and dunescapes painted during the period 1909. The difference between these works and the sketch discussed above rests in Mondrian's technique and colour, his choice of technique and colour enabled him to explore pictorial space. These paintings continued his development of chromoluminist, pointillist technique. The significance of this exploration was that it enabled Mondrian to reduce even further, the properties of reference to landscape, properties even pictorial conventions, that had been established through the evolution of seventeenth century Dutch landscape painting. Although in 'Dunes 1, 11 and 111' Mondrian divided the pictorial rectangle into basically two areas, possibly based on his response to his perception of the top edges of the dunes. But the manner in which he tactily applied the paint across all of these small canvases reduced the illusionistic perspective space to an absolute perceptible minimum. What Mondrian challenged, in these paintings, was the pictorial knowledge that is brought to the perception of the paintings by the viewer. The



pictorial illusionistic space indicators were removed and replaced by tactile spatial surfaces. They were therefore advanced abstract paintings by intention and not by apparent accident as in Toorop's 'Woodcutter'.

The, 'Dunescapes', show Mondrian's development of technique and colour usage through the three works from the very loosely applied subtractively mixed paint in, 'Dune 1', to a much more additive paint application in, 'Dune 111'. There are two further paintings related through title, 'Sea after sunset', both having been painted in 1909. The smallest of these combines two techniques a loosely applied pointillist method whilst and brush strokes of a more overtly Fauvist style. This canvas was divided into three areas. Mondrian's use of colour and tone created almost ambiguous illusionistic space, a type of space that is not present in the three studies of dunes. The second of these two paintings, 'Sea after sunset' again developed the ambiguity of surface and space. The surface was established through a technique that was directly related to, 'Woods near Oele'. In this work Mondrian used four major lines or edges as panoramic devices. Marks were used in the lower half of the canvas at an angle of  $90^{\circ}$  to the picture plane whilst in the upper half they were laid on parallel to the picture plane, once again tone was used to describe space. These paintings were an attempt to create a balance between the tactility of the marks and the illusionistic space. In the painting which is simply called, 'Sea view', 1909, Mondrian once again reduced the space element to little more than that which is caused by optical relationships, whilst in, 'Beach at Domburg', 1909, he once again employed a combination of techniques and colour that continued the idea of ambiguous space. In this painting he even went so far as to introduce a, 'repoussoir', element: the angular dune edge on the right hand side. This combined with the dark tone horizon line brings the quality of ambiguity to the canvas. It is therefore possible that this element came about due to the place

in which Mondrian might have painted these pictures. The larger of the two paintings, 'Sea after sunset' could well have been painted in a plein air situation, and so could 'Beach at Domburg'. Whilst it is more likely that, 'Dune 11', was painted in Mondrian's studio. Thus the studio works could be said to be the result of a more synthetic process than the plein air canvases, which although being closely connected in theme and technique with the, 'Dunes', are still the result of the direct perception of landscape.

During 1909 Mondrian began the first two of the final four dune landscapes paintings. These first two are quite obviously working studies for, 'Dune V1', 1909/11 and studies for, 'Dune landscape', 1909/11 the largest painting in the whole series. The first two paintings in this later series, although using slightly differently proportioned canvases are very similar in compositional terms. The lower section of the canvas, which comprises the dunes, in both instances is the larger area. Where these two works differ is in their tonality. 'Dune 1V', is generally lighter in tone whilst, 'Dune V', is dark in tone with contrasting light tonal areas, whilst, 'Dune 1V' has contrasting dark tonal areas. In appearance the paint on, 'Dune 1V', was applied in a manner that was more gestural and is in this way reminiscent of, 'Dune 1', whilst, 'Dune V', was painted with greater control on the mark-making process. In neither of these works is there any truly recognizable use of pointillist technique. This change of the technical application of paint was the forerunner of the technique used very frequently by Mondrian on his Cubist paintings.

The colours used on, 'Dune V', 'Dune V1' and 'Dune landscape' were blue and yellow. The intensity of colours was such that what illusionistic space there is becomes ambiguous, whilst in, 'Dune 1V', there remains a property of foreground, midground and horizon. The tightening of the brushwork and the intense colour relationship has the effect of flattening out the midground and almost in the



instances of 'Dune V' and 'Dune VI', established a flat horizontal plane lying parallel to the picture plane which is the area of the dune. The sky and the sea were painted again in blue, the sea being the deepest tone is a small horizontal triangle. The sky Mondrian painted in a slightly lighter tone than the sea but darker than the blue of the dune, he thereby created coloured optical space and not a space that was reliant upon perspective projection.

In, 'Dune landscape', 1911, Mondrian changed various specific details of those he used in 'Dune V', and 'Dune VI', but the general composition and sense of scale is the same. The colour used is again an intense blue and yellow. The canvas was divided into two major areas, the landscape and the sky. Once again Mondrian established an ambiguity of space through the same technique of colour relationship and brushwork that he employed in previous two paintings. But there is also another spatial element present, one not used in the two earlier paintings. In this final canvas Mondrian used an oblique movement across the entirety of the area that was land area itself. These movements he painted in intense yellow contrasting with the blue. All of these surfaces, including the sky, he worked over with short stripes, which due to the multiple changes of their direction in the sky area, creates an area full of energy, a sky that was mobile and changing, whilst the dunescape remains relatively more static except for the property of movement caused by the play of light.

This painting with its inherent colour relationships, between yellow and blue, demonstrates Mondrian's personal interpretation of the influence of colour theories with which he had become concerned. The general symbolic properties towards which Mondrian's paintings had evolved during his period of Luminism is generally equatable with the precedence of French painting that have previously been considered. These properties were further expressed in the two paintings, 'Church at Domburg', 1910/11 and, 'The Red Mill', 1910/11.

The first of these paintings, 'Church at Domburg', was quite obviously a studio painting and was based on the precise architectural drawing made in 1909, as were the series of paintings, 'Lighthouse at Westkapelle'. The composition of the painting Mondrian related very closely to the area divisions of the drawing, which is not the case with, 'The Red Mill', neither of these paintings he painted in a manner that can properly be termed luminist, in the sense of the, 'Lighthouse at Westkapelle' 1909/10.

The final version of, 'The Red Mill' is a considerably formalised version of the original source of this painting. The reason for this was probably in Mondrian's dissatisfaction with the psychological distance that the original study created between itself and the viewer. His task was then, to create a painting based loosely on the study, but one that confronted the viewer with a monumental presence, rather than just stimulating memories of perceptual responses. His intention seems to have been to compose a work that confronted the viewers subjective being through a process of symbolic stimulation.

There were two ways in which Mondrian could achieve this and both had been tackled in earlier paintings. The first concerned the area composition, which could be either symmetrical or asymmetrical. This aspect had been worked upon in the lighthouse and earlier church drawings and paintings, whilst the relationship of asymmetrical areas had been explored in the dune paintings. The vertical format canvases Mondrian composed the vertical canvases symmetrically whilst the horizontal canvas he composed asymmetrically. He chose, in the, 'Red mill' to intensify the symmetry. In addition he emphasised the verticality of the mill by changing the proportions of the final canvas, he reduced the horizontal dimension in relation to the vertical. Mondrian swung the mill round on its axis to provide a frontal view rather than an oblique view of the blades as in the study. In the final canvas he retained the curvature of the land area, upon which the mill stands in the study, but in addition he introduced a property



of parallax. This was not taken from the study but is from the architectural studies of church and tower. He used it to give vertical massiveness to the mill. Mondrian also made a change to the blades. These he also placed in perfect triangular symmetry across the top of the canvas, thus introducing a feeling of arrested dynamism. There was possibly for Mondrian, a monumental symbolic relationship between this the, 'Red mill', and the , 'Windmill', painted in 1904 whilst Mondrian was living at Uden Brabant, but in the instance of the, 'Red mill' he gave no information about temporal time. This Mondrian avoided through the use of colour which bears no relationship to a perceived reality, but was used to enlighten the presence of the Mill, thereby giving intensity to its expressive symbolism. The Mill, as had the churches and the light towers, express an 'inescapable heaviness', a quality that Mondrian expressed in many earlier Mill paintings. But in the Lighthouses and Churches and especially in the 'Red mill' Mondrian attempted to create pictorial balance, for in each instance, the upward thrust of the vertical movement was checked by the use of a compositional device, which was one of his reasons for the symmetrical dynamic triangulation on the top area of the Mill. The property of compositional balance is therefore an important element in the construction of his expressive symbolism.

Mondrian's involvement with symbolism, as depicted in the, 'Red mill', also illustrates his involvement with the new climate of painterly thought, which was one of the basic factors of his Luminist period, in addition he adopted a position that gave more emphasis to the metaphysical subjectivist ideologies. This position was no doubt in line with his readings in Theosophy and his membership of the Theosophical society which dated from 1909. Theosophy stresses a number of metaphysical factors, two of importance to Mondrian's evolution were the stress given to the spiritual life and secondly the pantheistic nature of true religion as taught by Theosophy.

Mondrian's overt use of the symbolism which expressed his interest in Theosophy dates back as far as 1900, as discussed earlier in relation to 'Portrait of a girl with flowers'. This aspect of his work flourished with real vigour during the period 1908 to 1911 culminating in, 'Evolution'. It manifests form in two subjects, flowers and females. The flowers, which were the subject of paintings expressing the life cycle, are chrysanthemums and sunflowers. The flower theme was in, 1908 combined, as it had been in 1900, with a portrait of a girl called, 'Devotion', discussed above and then in, 'Passion flower', a study that was obviously the forerunner for the three figures in, 'Evolution'. The two works, 'Spring', 1908 and, 'Devotion', have in them, devices that Mondrian used to express unseen forces, the noumenal forces present in such a subject as, 'Devotion'.

The second study that acts as an obvious source for the figures in, 'Evolution', is, 'Nude', 1908/11. He formalised the perceptual study of, 'Nude', giving true frontality to the figures in the three final paintings. He replaced the head with the head used in, 'Passion flower', on the two side figures, whilst the central figure has an abstracted version of the head drawn in, 'Nude'. Mondrian also altered the proportions of the figure with the intention of enhancing the vertical thrust of the three figures. The whole of this work is symbolic in the sense that it is related to the movement of symbolism that is called literary symbolism. The figures with their upturned heads and closed eyes symbolise a search for spiritual truth, whilst the central figure with its eyes open symbolises the transcendence of the being into the third stage of spiritual evolution. The yellow hatched paint surrounding the shoulders and head symbolises attained knowledge, or does it?

It is correct or even reasonable to interpret Mondrian's use of colours in this and other overtly literary symbolist paintings from the predetermined symbolic colour scheme of either Charles Henry's, 'Esthetique scientifique', or from the colour determination of the



Theosophic Movement, theories posited by such people as Besant and Leadbetter. To take the latter group and consider the colour of, 'Evolution', in relation to their theories, it becomes possible, as has been partly demonstrated, to analyse, 'Evolution', in purely Theosophic terms and to read this painting and other literary symbolist paintings in the same way. But to carry out this sort of symbolic analysis requires that the colour used by Mondrian to paint, 'Dune landscape', 'Dune V', and, 'Dune VI', be disregarded or described as misused or meaningless, for the colours are in fact the same in all instances. To do either of these two things is to deny the importance of the major reference point of Mondrian's whole development up to 1911. What must be taken account of is that Mondrian was evolving along two parallel symbolic paths, one based in literary sources the other being based in painterly sources. After completing, 'Evolution', Mondrian never again painted anything using the form of literary symbolism. The reasons for this are not immediately apparent but may well be based upon the idea that the symbolic elements used in these works are pre-determined, whilst the symbolism achieved in, 'Dune landscape', whilst adhering to the contemporary symbolist theories is in fact a totally individualistic expression. It is a painting that had been concluded in accordance with the stimulus of his own intuition and subjective experience, through which he had discovered formal equivalents or correspondences to his feelings about the dune landscape and the Mill. It would appear therefore, that the direct Theosophically inspired universal symbolism that Mondrian devised for the painting of 'Evolution' was not a concomitant with Mondrian's developing understanding of the real essence of universal plastic symbols. The symbols used in painting of 'Evolution', did not reside in a balanced opposition of the subject and object.

This point needs to be considered with more care for it was the fundamental essence of that which had evolved out of Mondrian's development of Luminism. It was therefore of vital importance to his

whole evolution for it, 'corresponds', not only to his artistic evolution but to his spiritual evolution. It is wrong to consider these two aspects as separate entities for by so doing the content of Mondrian's work would be lost. Albert Aurier's comment should be kept in mind when making such a division.

The work of art is the translation of a special and natural language from a spiritual gift of variable value, at least it is a fragment of the artists spirituality, at most his entire spirituality, plus the spiritual essence of various objective being. (24)

(6) Mondrian's development of Luminism questions through its progress from 1908 to 1911 from 'Woods near Oele' to 'Dune landscape' both sides of the difference of opinion between the symbolists as represented by Gauguin and Seurat. The second of these two artists, Seurat, believed in and developed an art that relied upon a truly scientifically based approach, one that drew upon the factual information of the physics of colour and from the experimental psychology of Charles Henry. From the premises established by the scientists, coupled with the experience of his own experiments, Seurat demonstrated that it was possible to determine visual equivalents of emotions and feelings. It was the interaction between his depth of scientific knowledge and his intuition that brought into being his marvellous and highly individual paintings. Gauguin's disagreement with Seurat was based upon the destructive property that he felt must be present in the use of objective theory, he felt that it was not possible for intuition to function when in harness with objectivity. Gauguin's work, based purely on intuition and subjectivism. Mondrian's visual examination of both sides of the argument is the reason for the apparent inconsistency in his paintings of this period. For if they are considered only with the criteria of chromoluminism, as propounded by Signac, then it can be seen that only, 'The church at Zoutelande' is a chromoluminst painting in the correct sense of the theories. So Mondrian's Luminist paintings must be understood as interpretive, since he was able to evolve a personal



symbolism or, as Aurier said, ' a special and natural language'. This resolution of the problem is epitomised in 'Dune landscape' but is partially hidden in 'Evolution' due to the predetermination of much of its symbolism. What had occurred in Mondrian's art is generally the same process as that which took place in the art of Van Gogh. There are, in fact, many close similarities between these two men. What differentiates between them was their individuality and the context of their time. What links them is their evolution towards an art that was in both cases essentially an art based in a noumenal conception rather than in phenomenal perception.

What may have occurred to Mondrian during his Luminist development was that paintings which expressed temporal time where a partial contradiction of universal values. The 'Haystack', paintings had been involved with just such a timescale, whilst in, 'Woods near Oele', he attempted to avoid the timescale that had in fact dominated his painting during his Hague/Amsterdam School Impressionist period. The significance of the 'Farm at Nistlerode' is thus apparent for, by using a synthetic palette to execute that work, Mondrian intuitively divorced this work of 1904 from its temporal and thus phenomenal being. It was an intuitive move that became a conscious force seven years later after much experiment with both Impressionist and chromo-luminist painting.

Mondrian had by 1911 embraced noumenal reality as propounded by Schopenhauer in his book 'Die Welt als Wille and Vorstellig'. In that work Schopenhauer drew a sharp distinction between the noumenal and the phenomenal realities. The influence of Schopenhauer's theories was to stimulate the movement of art away from naturalism towards an art of ideas and fantasy which resulted in a noumenal ideology and consequently in necessary symbolism.

Mondrian had then, by 1911, established himself as an ideological artist in the senses described above and previously. His work had become symbolist in the general sense that the art of Van Gogh, Gauguin and Seurat's art became symbolist. For Mondrian, unlike Sluyters and Gestel, his arrival at this position was only the beginning of his contribution to modern art, although it cannot be denied that his contribution to the Dutch Luminist movement was the most important.

As in the discussion of previous styles of paintings the same process of trial and error elimination was strongly present throughout this whole period, in fact it played a more significant role than previously owing to the nature of the enormous change that took place, from an art based on phenomenal motivations to an art based in noumenal motivations, but a motivation that Mondrian realised had necessarily to be individual. Mondrian's evolving consciousness had thus led him to a pantheistic position out of which his next period of development would emerge and the construction of the, 'special and natural language', of Neo plasticism would appear.



Footnotes - Chapter 5.

1. Mondrian catalogue. Introduction and notes Robert Welsh and Robert Rosenblum. 1966, Toronto, Philadelphia, The Hague, p.106.
2. B. Loojses-Terpstra, Moderne Kunst in Nederlands, 1900 to 1914. Pb Haentjens Dekker en Gumbert : Utrecht 1968.
3. John Rewald, Post Impressionism, from Van Gogh to Gauguin. Pb Museum of Modern Art New York. 1966.
4. Sven Loevgren. The Genesis of Modernism. Pb Indiana University Press 1971. p.156.
5. Ibid.
6. The nineteenth century Rossicrucians were led by 'The Sur', Meroduch Josephin Peledan. It was under his guidance that an artistic and religious idealistic and spiritualistic society of Catholic Rossicrucians was founded. A society whose aim was the renovation of art through mysticism.
7. Op cit, see n3.
8. Op cit, see n2, ch.1 and 2.
9. Op cit, see n3, pp.247-298.
10. Ibid, pp. 267 to 368.
11. 193, 197, 206 and 207. Cercle Chromatique Rapporteur Esthétique. William Inner Homer Seurat and the Science of Painting Pb. MIT 1964 p.216.
12. Op cit, see n1, p.106.
13. Op cit see n2, ch 2.
14. Ibid 2.
15. Each of the cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague has its art societies, these are formed by professional artists for the purposes of propogating and sponsoring the work of their members. To this day they are an important part of the artistic communities in each of these cities.

16. Op cit, see n 2, ch 1.
17. Ibid
18. Not only did the colour theorists, such as Rood, suggest that dots could be employed for the additive technique of mixing colour, they also suggested the use of stripes.
19. Piet Mondrian: een catalogue van zijn werk in Nederlands openbaar bezit. Cor Blok. Pb Meulenhoff 1974.  
  
Three of these works are in the collection of Mondrian's work at the Haags Gemeente Museum. It should also be noted that recent research has shown that M. Seuphor's dating of these works is inaccurate.
20. Op cit see n1, p.110.
21. Op cit, see n16, pp. 18, 130, 133, 210, 246, 243.
22. Op cit see n30, pp.74-154.
23. Ibid, p.114
24. Op cit no.5.



## Chapter 6. Mondrian and Cubism.

- Subchapters:
- (1) The Amsterdam milieu.
  - (2) Mondrian's first experiments with Cubism.
  - (3) The influence of Cubism.
  - (4) The influence and impact of Picasso and the Parisian Cubists.
  - (5) Towards Post-Cubism and Neo plasticism
  - (6) The development of criticism of Mondrian's work in the Netherlands.
  - (7) Mondrian's return to the Netherlands, his Post-Cubist experiments, the direct basis for Neo plasticism.
  - (8) Mondrian and the Amsterdam milieu during the First World War, his first meetings with Bart van der Leek and Theo van Doesburg.
  - (9) Footnotes.

## Chapter 6.

(1) Mondrian, having by 1911, achieved the acknowledged position in the Netherlands of the most modern artist through his personal development of Luminism, found himself confronted with the Cubist paintings and doctrines of the Parisian Cubist artists. During October 1911, Conrad Kickert organised at the Stedelijk Museum, under the auspices of the Moderne Kunst Kring<sup>(1)</sup> an exhibition of Cubist paintings, which included works by Picasso and Braque. The Cubists had also been invited to exhibit their work in Brussels during the preceeding June after their major manifestation at the Salon des Independents. The work that was exhibited by Braque and Picasso dated from 1908 and 1909, which falls into the period of the Cubist experiment termed 'analytic'. It was also a period in which the palette of Picasso and Braque can be understood as the antithesis of the Post Impressionist additive palette, being primarily made up of earth colours. Together with the work of Picasso and Braque in Amsterdam were some paintings by Le Fauconnier, who represented the other Parisian branch of Cubism which had evolved out of the collapse of the Abbaye Cr teuil. This group included Delaunay, Gleizes and Metzinger as well as Le Fauconnier. Later they were joined by Juan Gris who became their foremost theoretician. The paintings exhibited by Le Fauconnier, were not so much analytic as radically symbolic, for they had a close ideological relationship with the socialist ideals of the 'Cret uil'.

Included in the exhibition organised by the Kunst Kring was the work of the Dutch artist, Loedwijk Schelfhout, who had developed a close contact with various advanced artists groups in Paris including those associated with the Caf  de Dome, where Matisse held court. He was also in contact with Gleizes and Metzinger. But of pre-eminent importance in Schelfhout's work was his assimilation of the influence of Paul C zanne and the implications of C zanne's work to the foundations of Cubism.



At the same time that the French Cubist exhibition opened in Amsterdam, twenty eight of Cézanne's paintings were relocated in the adjoining rooms to the Cubist exhibition. The opening address was delivered by Jan Toorop, whose position was at the time that of the father figure of the Modern Movement in the Netherlands. In his speech he stressed the truly seminal importance of Cézanne's work and his stimulant role to the foundations of Cubism.

The function of Loedwijk Schelfhout in bringing about the sudden shift of artistic interest and attitude in Dutch art during this period was very important for it was through his correspondence with Conrad Kickert, coupled with Kickert's Parisian visits, that Kickert and the Moderne Kunst Kring decided upon exhibiting what Schelfhout felt was the most important tendency in the art movement in Paris of 1910. It was during this same period that the importance and influence of Matisse was established, it was therefore significant that Schelfhout and Kickert isolated Cubism as the 'new art', which should be manifested through the media of the Modern Kunst Kring at the Stedelijk Museum.

Schelfhout had begun to exhibit his work in Paris at the Salon des Independents in 1907. But it was not until 1910, through the introduction of Conrad Kickert, that Mondrian began his friendship and correspondence with Schelfhout<sup>(2)</sup>. As the number of these letters progress they reveal the split that occurred between firstly Mondrian and Schelfhout. Which eventually was found to have been caused by Kickert. This in turn caused Schelfhout and Mondrian to re-unite in friendship against Kickert. Their letters reveal the personality clashes that occurred in the dynamic of the developing modern Dutch art milieu.

The impact of the new movements, Cubism, Expressionism and Fauvism, was one of conflict with the old order as represented by Impressionism, which in the Netherlands was manifested in the paintings of the Hague and Amsterdam Schools. There had been

demonstrations against the new Dutch movement of Luminism, as there were in Paris demonstrations against Cubism. In Paris and in Amsterdam the selection panels for exhibitions made contentious decisions against the new movements, trying vainly to sustain the old order, i.e. the Impressionist concept of art being based on nothing but perceptual responses, as against the Modernist conceptual theory of art<sup>(3)</sup>. What arose during this period in support of the modernist tendencies in the Netherlands, were a number of private galleries, such as Oldenzaal in Rotterdam, and Walrecht in The Hague. Private collectors began to play an important role in supporting the new art, indeed Kickert himself purchased a considerable collection of paintings, including works by Mondrian, Schelfhout and Le Fauconnier. Another important element that came into being was the advent of critics who supported, in their columns and magazines, the new spirit; men such as H.P. Bremmer, N.H. Wolf, W. Steenhoff and Albert Plasc-haert, although he carried out a number of hopefully destructive attacks on Mondrian. Wolf was in fact the director of a periodical called 'De Kunst', and it was in that paper that Kickert published his articles on Luminism and the new movements.

There are many other figures of considerable importance who could be mentioned, whose actions led to and aided the development of the new tendencies, in Dutch art, for example, the German Herwarth Walden, who had organised the 'De Sturm', exhibition in Berlin in 1911, brought to and propagated in the Netherlands, examples of German Expressionism.

The modern movement had by 1911 established itself in the Netherlands not only in Amsterdam, but in other major centres including Nijmegen in the eastern part of the country. Rotterdam and The Hague in the province of Holland and of course at Domburg in the far south west province of Zeeland. As has been shown there were collectors, galleries and literary propagandists, all of these were led by the example of the Moderne Kunst Kring, whose governing body



consisted of artists. Its chairman was Jan Toorop, the secretary was Conrad Kickert and among its committee members were Jan Sluyters, Piet Mondrian and Petrus Alma. In Paris Loedwijk Schelfhout took up a position that might be metaphorically described as 'Parisian artistic informant'. The example and influence of this society was such that it forced during 1912, both the two other societies in Amsterdam, St. Lucas and Arti, to alter their policy decisions. They had both at the beginning of 1912 taken up a position of opposition to the new art, but by the end of the year they had adjusted their policies in support of the new art.

Several factors seem to have led to Mondrian's decision to move to Paris at the beginning of 1912. The two exhibitions, those of Cézanne and the Cubists appear to have been of considerable importance. Another factor was that of Kickert's persuasion, and offer of a studio flat. Also, as can be seen from Mondrian's first recorded letter to Schelfhout, he was very interested to exhibit his work in Paris. 'I should like you to inform me on the exhibition L'Union Intdes Beaux Arts et Lettres, Alcassar d'Eté, Champs Elyssés. Please write me what kind of work is hanging there, if it is in our spirit or not.' Domburg 3rd October 1910. It was in December of that same year that Mondrian helped Kickert found the Moderne Kunst Kring, it is therefore reasonable to suppose that, 'our spirit', referred to in the above quotation, was the spirit or philosophy of art out of which the Moderne Kunst Kring sprang, the conceptual view of art.

On the twentieth of December 1911, Mondrian gave up his Amsterdam address in preparation for his move to Paris, the influence of Kickert's persuasion can be seen in that Mondrian's first registered address in Paris was Rue de Depart 26, where Kickert had a studio. Also in the same building lived and worked Loedwijk Schelfhout.

(2) Before departing for Paris, Mondrian began, if he did not complete, six paintings that were in a Cubist style. There is a considerable debate as to whether he began to paint in this style before :



he arrived in Paris or after. The dating of these works as illustrated in the catalogue, 'Piet Mondrian'. (Blok,) makes it clear that they must have been painted or started during the period of his summer stay in 1911 at Domburg, and in Amsterdam during the autumn. To place it in the contemporary context, during the period just prior to and during the time of the Cubist and Cézanne exhibitions in Amsterdam. As a member of the committee of the Moderne Kunst Kring he must have been very aware of the sort of work that was to be exhibited during November 1911, much earlier in the year.

Mondrian's six paintings can be split into three groups, (1) figure studies, (2) still lifes and (3) landscapes. He was then changing his style whilst maintaining a link with his past through subject, object selection. Reference to the evolution graphs will show that there is this link.

In considering the abruptness of the change of style, it appears that there was an inconsistency in Mondrian's evolution. For almost 'overnight', he discarded his synthetic palette for a palette that was basically made up of earth colours, close to that of Cézanne, Picasso and Braque. This appears on the face of it to have been the negation of much that he had striven for during his period of transition, from 1908 commencing with 'Woods at Oele', and culminating in 1910/11 with 'Dune landscape', a painting of a very abstract nature and in abstract terms far in advance of 'Still life with ginger pot 1', 1911.

Mondrian's Luminist period, as has been shown, was a time of transition from a perceptually orientated art to an art based in the import of the 'theories of correspondencies', or to put it simply to conceptually based art. This shift resulted in paintings that were subjectively symbolic. 'Dune landscape', which evolved in exactly the same manner as 'Dune V1', of 1909/10. That is it began as a pencil sketch, then an oil study. These were then formalised in Mondrian's studio during the winter months. What occurred then



was that during Mondrian's summer visits to Domburg, he became deeply involved in gathering information in the form of sketches and drawings, upon which he could draw during the winter months. This is substantiated by 'the two sketch books'. Therefore it seems reasonable to presume that Mondrian became concerned with the propositions of Cubism, and possibly considered them in sketch form during the summer of 1911 whilst in Domburg. If this is the case then the apparent overnight shift of style was slower than is suggested by some critics, who consider it to have simply been caused by the Cubist exhibition. By doing so they conveniently disregard the artistic milieu of Amsterdam and Domburg, especially that centered around the Moderne Kunst Kring. For as Schelfhout was in contact with Gleizes and Metzinger there can be no doubt that he drew Kickert's attention to Cubism long before 1911, for as stated above he was exhibiting in Paris as early as 1907, and although Braque and Picasso kept more or less to themselves, the Post Cr eteil Group Section D'Or', were inclined to manifest their ideas publicly, which resulted in the book 'Du Cubisme', written by Gleizes and Metzinger being published in 1912.

The intentions of Mondrian's art in the years since 1908, in a conscious manner, and before that in an unconscious manner, had been to express reality and not the appearance of reality, to develop a knowledge and expression of the immutable universals of reality.

'I never painted these things romantically, but from the very beginning, I was always a realist'. These intentions had led him into the general area of symbolism of the Neo Impressionists, the literary symbolists and the Fauves. He had moved away from the imitative styles of painting of the perceptually based impressionists. The Dutch contribution and especially Mondrian's, to the European shift of artistic sensibility had been Luminism. A style of art, like that of the other Post Impressionist movements, based in the philosophic influence of Schopenhauer and German Idealist Philosophy,<sup>(4)</sup>



as was shown in the previous section. The concepts of reality contained in that philosophy concerning the description of reality through the media of the plastic arts are indirectly traceable to interpretations of Plato. For example, to part ten 'Theory of Art', in the 'Republic' and to the 'Timaeus', sections eighteen to twenty six<sup>(5)</sup>. For Cubism Plato's concept of, 'the Forms', had a direct bearing. There can be no doubt that Mondrian knew of Plato's propositions and its subsequent philosophic development, his knowledge being gained from two sources. The theories of art identified and discussed in the previous section and from his studies of Theosophy. There were two main sources with which, in the early 1900's, he is known to have concerned himself. The writings of Madame Blavatsky together with the Theosophic Societies journals and the work by Edouard Schure,<sup>(6)</sup> 'The Great Initiates', in which Schure put forward an all embracing view of religion, tracing and connecting the knowledge of the initiates through the developing cultures of India, Asia Minor and the Middle East. One of the main, if not the main revelations of the initiates, as recorded and revealed by Schure and by Madame Blavatsky in her two works, 'Isis Unveiled', and, 'The Secret Doctrine', was the pantheistic view of God. This view of God was revealed to an initiate through the long process of initiation which used abstract symbols such as that of the Egyptian Tau.

Plato in his works propounded the concept of pantheism as did Baruch Spinoza later in his 'Ethics'. It is probable that Mondrian was early in the 1900's, knowledgeable of Spinoza's works for in his essay of a few years later he mentions the importance of Spinoza. In his treatise Spinoza had defined substance, his definition is important to the understanding of the religious view that Mondrian held and attempted to express in his paintings and his writings.

'I understand substance, (substantia), to be that which is in itself and is conceived through itself: I mean that, the conception of which does not depend on the conception of another thing from which



it must be formed.' (8)

There is one further aspect of Spinoza's philosophy that must here be considered before proceeding to a consideration of Mondrian's cubist development and that is Spinoza's concept of an active rather than a passive mind, this has been touched on previously. An analogy that can be drawn between Spinoza's concept and the development of Mondrian's overall concept of art is that Mondrian was at this time beginning to understand art as being the product of an active mind rather than being the passive result of a perceptual response. He was beginning to understand the action of the mind as operating within the context of his own artistic evolution as a deductive procedure. Therefore what Spinoza propounded in terms of the active mind is significant to the change that was taking place in Mondrian's attitude.

'An idea is a concept of the mind which the mind forms because it is a recognition. I say concept rather than percept, because perception seems to indicate that the mind is passive, but concept seems to express an act of the mind.' (50)

In his 'two sketch books', which were begun during the period of Mondrian's development which is at present under consideration, he wrote for himself, a number of notes which are exactly analogous to those concepts contained in Spinoza's 'Ethics'. For example Mondrian wrote on the subject of God's free will, on good and evil and the predetermination of the nature of man by God, the eternal and universal spirit.

'Concerning good and evil, beauty and ugliness, (this is mere appearance) it is said, if mankind had been better, this or that would have not occurred, but man is as he is therefore this is good and necessary.' (10) 'Man is not a God, who can achieve goodness according to his own will.' 'The inner image is formed in our souls. This image is what we must render through form. For in nature the surface of things is beautiful, but its imitation is lifeless. The



object gives us everything, but their depiction gives us nothing.

Art was always too concerned with imitation, despite the artists' good intentions.' (11)

'The two sketch books', coupled with Mondrian's letters of this period, form a very good model of the development of Mondrian's mind during this period. They describe accurately his developing realisation of the complete interaction of his thoughts on art and religion as being one and the same thing. There were, in 'the two sketch books', fifteen main subject themes upon which Mondrian wrote. These can be subdivided to form one hundred and three subjects. The fifteen are here given, but not the subdivision as they are self evident from a reading of his notes.

(1) Teleology. (2) Religion. (3) Evolution. (4) The theory of opposites. (4) The essence of male and female. (6) The spirit and the spiritual, the inner life. (7) Matter and materialism. (8) The nature of Form. (9) The hidden laws of reality. (10) The nature of surface. (11) Knowledge, consciousness, intuition and perception. (12) Abstract art and illusionistic, (realistic), art. (13) Harmony, beauty and universal beauty. (14) Relativity. (15) Modern science.

The realisation of the state of his art and his subsequent intentions, Mondrian well described in the following quotation from 'the two sketch books'. It was written in terms of a general statement thereby leaving space for the process of deduction to occur.

That which initially fascinates us subsequently loses its attraction, (as with toys). After having loved surface, (appearances) for a long time, one searches for something greater and yet this is equally present in surface. By looking beneath the latter, one views the inner. Beholding the surface. (12)

Mondrian's phrase 'one searches for something greater, and yet this is equally present in surface', is really an acknowledgement of his developing consciousness of the presence of the primal substance in all things and as being the cause of all things. The surface was for Mondrian, as he revealed above, the effect of the cause. This concept completely concurs with Spinoza's concept of, (substantia),



that surface is an extension, a mode of the cause.

Mondrian's acceptance of Edouard Schure's view that religions are all the same, he substantiated in the following quotation, one in which he also treated upon the nature of form.

All religions have the same fundamental content; they differ only in form. The form is the external manifestation of this content, and is thus an indispensable vehicle for the expression of the primal principles. Through the form the primal principles operate in mankind. Form will be to a specific period of human development. Consequently, form is dependent upon the period and upon the measure of man's development. This implies that the form can never continuously remain the same. This also holds good for form in art. (Think of the varying architectural forms of temples).' (13)

From this, the nature of Mondrian's growing artistic intentions can be deduced, firstly his intention to seek reality, the reality that is the cause of the effect. Secondly, to discover a manner of expressing that reality in form that was of the time. Thirdly, the discovery of forms that did not contain the illusion of external appearance..

This period of conceptual development in Mondrian's artistic career, as revealed through his notes, also makes clear the relationship claimed above for the connection of his conceptual objects with those of Plato.

Art and Reality. Art transcends reality - it has no direct rapport with reality. Between the physical and the ethereal space there is a boundary clearly delimited for our senses; yet the ether penetrates the physical sphere and acts upon it. In this manner the artistic sphere pervades reality, but for our senses they are two separate entities, the spiritual and the material. In order to approach the spiritual in art, one employs reality as little as possible.'

The reality referred to here by Mondrian is the reality of realistic, mimetic art forms, illusionism.

'...because reality is the polar opposite of the spiritual. This explains logically why primary forms are employed.' (14)

The following quotation continues to substantiate the point that is at present being put forward.

The spiritual in physical form, but also in other intermediate forms, (which we do not see).



If one conceives these intermediate forms as increasingly simple and pure, commencing with the physical visible forms of appearance, then one passes through a world of forms ascending from reality to abstraction. In this manner, one approaches spirit or purity itself. It follows from this that spirit is more easily approached by means of a form which is closer to spirit - and indeed least of all by the physical form. (15).

Mondrian's links with Platonic thought, as propounded in the sections of Plato's works cited earlier, are quite obvious.

These then were some of the major concepts that Mondrian was beginning to formulate during 1912 the year in which he started to deeply involve himself in Cubism with his arrival in Paris.

A criticism that Mondrian could have made against his painting 'The red mill', for example, was that as a painting in terms of expressing his developing and new understanding of space, it still existed as two parts. The space around the object and the object, which when combined together with the sense of scale and colour manifested as subjective symbol. What he could have decided was that the painting did not make it clear that the mill was as much space as the space surrounding it, and that the space surrounding the mill was as much object as the mill. The result of this possible criticism, may have led Mondrian to discard in his first Cubist experiments the element of symbolism, that he had painstakingly developed from 1908 to 1911.

Mondrian must, as part of his analytical criticism, have realised that although his Luminist development transcended in spiritual terms and in painterly terms the work of his Hague School paintings, he had discarded one of the elements that had begun to appear in those paintings, a developing pictorial structuralism. This element had been negated in such paintings as 'Mill near Domburg', 1909 in which he had primarily concerned himself with symbolic expression. His Luminist paintings revealed the nature of colour and of colour space, through the additive interaction of colour.

In 'Dune landscape' it appears that Mondrian realised the importance of organising the objects of his thought, from a con-



ceptual basis of both colour and structure. In this painting he intensified the structure to a greater degree than can be observed in any of his previous dunescapes. The impact of this realisation and its development necessitated disarding the elements of subjective symbolism, both in form and colour.

The reasons for this shift of emphasis and re-evaluation of the nature of painting were of course, based in a multitude of factors. For whenever Mondrian previously achieved a high degree of excellence in a given stylistic idiom, such as can be seen in 'Great landscape', 1907 or earlier in such works as 'Landscape with ditch', 1895, he always began to search for a 'new way', a more challenging form of working. These changes are not immediately apparent owing to the camouflage of illusionistic objects. 'Dune landscape', should be seen and understood as the pinnacle of Mondrian's Luminist phase but also the point at which the need for a fresh beginning became evident.

(3) The painting, with its oil sketch, that has often been acknowledged as representing the beginnings of Mondrian's cubist period is, 'Still life with ginger pot 11', 1911/12. In the terms outlined above it is analogous to 'Woods near Oele', 1908 but in that work can be seen the influences of Fauvism, of Seurat and Symbolism in the later work the influence of Cézanne is present. Coupled with Mondrian's own personal need for change, the influence of Cézanne and his obvious seminal role in the development of Cubism, must have aided and directed Mondrian's consciousness towards the development of what was thrusting itself to the 'surface', in 'Dune landscape'. For Cézanne's work had developed as the anti-thesis of subjective symbolism, instead Cézanne posited an art that considered reality from an analytic viewpoint. Cézanne's antithetical position being that of relative objectivity.

Although pointillism and the generative basis of symbolism had developed from a truly conceptual standpoint, the concepts which it

embodied had exemplified the subjective, as is well exemplified by Redon's painting. This movement resulted in Fauvism and Expressionism which Mondrian, like Cézanne before him came to realise rested in individualistic subjective reactions to the physical and the sensory.

Cézanne excluded from his landscapes the predominating European quality of mood or atmosphere which before his appearance seemed to be an indisputable part of European landscape painting.

Cézanne's painting, as can be seen in the series of paintings of 'Montagne Sainte Victoire', developed an objective symbolism through the series to the final version of 1904/06. This formalism he developed from a conceptualisation of perceptual response, a process that 'eliminated the errors', of transient appearance. Cézanne's painting as represented by the above mentioned painting<sup>(16)</sup> expressed none of the sensory responses of Van Gogh's Provencal paintings<sup>(17)</sup>. Which were paintings where form was relative to temporal sensory experience or correspondencies to that experience. In the majority of Cézanne's mature paintings there is no evidence of a time scale, except that the objects were perceived under daylight conditions. Instead Cézanne concentrated his vision upon the structure of reality, the unchanging structure of the indeterminate face of reality.

In the progress of Mondrian's period of Luminist painting it became obvious that the Impressionist idea of establishing a time scale diminished from the very outset, although it was experimented with in a number of works, finally undergoing, 'error elimination'. It diminished as Mondrian emphasised pure colour as in 'Church at Zoutelande'. By 1911 Mondrian's painting had three main facets, an intensity of synthetic colouration, which he had developed in two aspects of symbolism, the first was epitomised in 'Evolution', the second, which became the antithesis of 'Evolution', was developed in 'Dune landscape'. The two paintings that act as a link



between these two polarities are 'Red mill', and 'Church at Domburg', both of which tend towards the conceptualised perceptual response, which takes painterly form as an objective symbolism, comparable to Cézanne's in 'Montagne Sainte Victoire'. The symbolism of 'Evolution' was based in literary sources and is contrived. It is important to note that these four paintings of Mondrian's were all painted in a similar manner, in colours of similar intensity, which in fact gives the impression of linking them closely together, which as shown is not the case.

The indebtedness of Mondrian to Cézanne takes true objective form in the two still lifes 'Still life with ginger pot 1 and 11', 1911/12 paintings in which Mondrian reverted to a subject category that he had not employed for eight years. One of the objects in his two still lifes he last used in a still life painted in 1901 'Still life with apples and a plate'. His two paintings of 1911/12 have some similarities with that painting in compositional terms, for in each case Mondrian placed a rounded object in the centre of the canvas, thus giving a circular or rotary movement at the central axial point of the painting. In the painting of 1901 he continued this circular movement across the painting through the placing of apples and the ginger pot. The small curved outlines of the apples form a horizontal movement which he then balanced with the larger curves of the ginger pot and the centralised plate. See diagram 19. The other elements of the compositional structure are the two horizontal lines, the lower one being formed by the edge of the tablecloth, the second through some indeterminate object edge. How important this early still life was to Mondrian, in the development of his Cubist still lifes, is impossible to ascertain, but it does have importance in the sense of historic review, especially when considered in terms of its structural rhythmic similarities to the two paintings, of 1911/12, see diagram 20. It is an element that took more dynamic form as his Cubist period progressed. In Mondrian's

still life paintings movement takes the viewers eye off the edge of the canvas, thereby accentuating the movement. This was a device that he had previously used in many of his landscapes, for example 'Dune landscape', 1911, or 'Wax candle factory', 1901.

In Cézanne's still life, to which Joosten draws attention<sup>(18)</sup> 'Still life with a basket', some interesting connections and points of difference between the two painters can be seen. It is amusing to note that both artists used a ginger pot. But in the instance of Cézanne he tilted it thus revealing the inside and thereby expressing depth. Although the edges of objects were used by Cézanne to construct the lines of his composition they were also placed so as to create pictorial depth. In the reproduction of his painting and its detail it can be seen that the objects were all painted to create real space, that in which they can be seen and in which they can be known to exist. He did not use his object edges to create surface lateral movement, as shown in the two reproductions and diagrams of Mondrian's still lifes. Cézanne used line to express staticness of objects in knowable space, and as in his landscapes the light quality is that of an all over light, giving no indication on an exact temporal scale. The temporal element had in Mondrian's early landscapes, those up to 1908, been a powerful expressive force, creating what has been termed the European necessity of mood. In his Cubist still lifes and later paintings this element Mondrian entirely negated, as had Cézanne.

Although there is to be seen in Mondrian's first 'Still life with ginger pot', a certain amount of sensory space, that which can be seen on the right hand side, caused by the perspective linear description of the books, his spatial intention was not that of Cézanne's painting. He was concerned with experimenting with and developing the same sort of conceptual spatial concepts as those which he would have seen in Braque's and Picasso's paintings,



being exhibited in Amsterdam. The Cubist concept of space was a development and a negation of the embodiment of space in Cézanne's painting

Even in Cézanne's final unfinished canvas, 'Montagne Sainte Victorie', which as can be seen is a very loosely brushed work, real sensory space is present, it was created through tonal progression and the construction of an analytic and pictorial structure. The paint marks were an inherent part of Cézanne's intention, that of giving expression to his observation of a landscape of which he had an intimate knowledge. Cézanne achieved in this painting, as he did in many others of his later years, a synthesis of objectivity and subjectivity which had been one of the aims of Divisionist painting. In the Netherlands this later Divisionist aim led to Jan Toorop's mannerisms and to painting of sentimental sweetness such as Jan Sluyter's 'Children's bedroom', 1910. Sluyter's painting expresses none of the experimental rigour of Mondrian's painting of the same period, but at the time they were both considered equally advanced artists.

Mondrian in his final essay *'Towards the true vision of Reality'* reiterated, in his own manner, Cézanne's belief. The essay was written as a reflection upon his life's work and development as an artist.

'My environment conditioned me to paint the objects of ordinary vision.'

'The first thing to change in my painting was the colour. I forsook natural colour for pure colour. I had come to feel that the colours of nature cannot be reproduced on canvas.'

'I felt that painting had to find a new way to express the beauty of nature.'

It took me a long time to discover that particularities of form and natural colour evoke subjective states of feeling which obscure pure reality. The appearance of natural forms changes but reality remains constant. To create pure reality plastically, it is necessary to reduce natural forms to the constant to the constant elements of form..'  
(19)

Cézanne's oft quoted advice to Bernard, 'see in nature the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, putting everything in proper perspective..' is exactly analogous in its mode of intention to Mondrian's, as reflected



in the above quotation.

Cézanne and the Cubists therefore represented for Mondrian the correct way, for at the same time that the Cubists and Cézanne were being exhibited in Amsterdam the paintings of Redon were being shown in a number of centres throughout the Netherlands. It is important to develop an understanding of the objectivism of Cézanne and his consequent influence that paintings by Redon be compared with Cézanne's. The subjectivism of Redon's painting by comparison is immediately apparent. Mondrian's decision in this manifold artistic climate, was to follow the path that he recognised himself always to unconsciously have followed. The path that was brought sharply into focus by Cézanne and the Cubists, of relative objectivism.

(4) In the Cubist exhibition, organised by the Moderne Kunst Kring, Picasso exhibited paintings that represented the enormous stylistic change that his work underwent between his expressionist period of the early 1900's to 1907. The three factors which apparently stimulated Picasso to make his enormous step as epitomised in 'Les Femmes d'Alger', 1907, were his dissatisfaction with his current style of painting, secondly, the growing influence of Cézanne, cited so clearly by Charles Biederman as the only real inspirational source of Cubism<sup>(20)</sup>. The third source or factor was for Picasso Negro art.

The influence of primitive art can be seen in Braque's painting as well as in Picasso's, although it is rather less direct. But if Braque's painting 'Grand nu', 1908 is compared with Cézanne's, 'Baigneuses' it can be seen that Braque's distorted and faceted his figure in a manner that cannot be derived from the style of Cézanne, for the figure has an expressionist fauvist quality and a primitive quality that is traceable to the example and influence of Gauguin. The other major difference between this painting of Braque's and Cézanne's is the manner in which Braque constructed the space of his painting. The space in Cézanne's painting, 'Baigneuses', is recessional



he arched the trees from either side of the canvas, setting a figure in the midground just off centre of the tree in the background which forms the centre point towards which the recessional space is directed. This painting has the traditional European foreground, midground, background and employs many of the traditional formal means for creating pictorial recessional space, the objects being set upon an illusionistic horizontal plane. The space constructed by Braque differed in that it was at one and the same time both recessional and projectional. He constructed a vertical plane that was placed in recessed space but from which the planear facets of the figure project forwards towards the picture plane. Braque painted the figure and its surroundings in such a manner that the only significant changes made to the figure were of tonality. Thus the painting became a complex of known triangulated space and an expression of perceivable triangulated projectional space. To understand this second mode of projectional space, reference should be made to the left hand side of the canvas, it can be seen that the tonality of this side, made up of faceted planes, is such that it created a pictorial plane at a considerable distance behind the object, from this area the faceted planes advance towards a central axis which runs through the object, see diagram 21. In the bottom right hand corner Braque set up two planes the edges of which indicate recessional space. This two part spatial construction is highly significant in the development of Cubism for it demonstrates a facet of the great Cubist endeavour that, of breaking with the pictorial spatial determinates of the past. It will be found that, although traditional perspective allowed for a multitude of view points, one of its universal determinants was that of recession. Braque's painting demonstrates the manner in which this enforced academic concept was refuted at the onset of Cubism. This break with academic concept of perspective space left Picasso, Braque and Léger free to present objects in space and from a multitude of directions simultaneously.

In the first of Mondrian's Cubist paintings 'Still life with ginger pot 1', the manifold spatial presentation described above cannot clearly be seen, the painting is relatively much closer in spatial terms to that to be seen in Cézanne's, 'Still life with basket'. In the second version of this subject Mondrian discarded the Cézannesque concept of space for that of the Cubists, due no doubt to the synthesis of his personal intentions and the influence of the exhibitions in Amsterdam during the fall of 1911. In this second version the horizontal recessional plane that Mondrian established in the first version, he tilted into vertical axis, from which he was able to construct a space that is very similar to that described in relation to Braque's, 'Grand nu'. Like Braque, Mondrian constructed in the second version only a minimum amount of visual information through which the recognisable object, the ginger pot, could exist in sensible space. The pot takes up the central point in the horizontal axis of the painting. Its vertical position is such that the exact central point of its base is placed exactly on the central point of the horizontal axis, the point where the central vertical axis intersects with the horizontal axis, this point Mondrian defined with a horizontal line, a line caused by the abutment of two vertical planes of differing tonality: see diagram 22. The provable method by which Mondrian determined the central position, was, as the diagrams show, through the simple method of intersecting diagonals, having established the central axial point he then appears to have carefully articulated the other objects around this focus, abstracting the objects and giving solidity to the pictorial structure. Through this possible method he arrived at a synthesis of the object and the pictorial structure. He appears to have purposefully used the position and tonality of the ginger pot to establish the weight of the painting above the central axial point. Through this decision he managed to discard the perspective recessional qualities of the ground plane which was present in the first version.



In that work the pot was placed so that the intersecting diagonal lines passed through the centre of the pot rather than through its base.

In version one Mondrian employed lines to describe the edges of planes but compared to version two his usage was rather tentative, for in the second version he defined planes of every type with lines. He used three types of line; curved, vertical/horizontal and angular: see the diagram 22. The position of the lines was determined according to a number of factors, on the object level, i.e., the edge of an object and the change of direction of planes of the object. These lines in the diagrams are demonstrated as layers, the first two layers comprising the curved lines, the second the angular lines. It is in the third layer that a complexity arises for if reference is made to version one it can be seen that the composition of the objects includes a number of vertical and horizontal lines, in the second version, and in diagram layer three it can be seen that Mondrian integrated these lines with a conceptual structure of horizontal and vertical lines. These form a perceivable, if not complete grid across the vertical plane from which the abstracted planes of the object project. The fourth and fifth diagrammatic layers are not perceivable in the manner that the top three are, their function is to demonstrate the rectangular grid that can be built up from the structural framework of layer three. The fifth layer's function is to simply demonstrate the point of intersection upon which the base of the pot was symmetrically placed.

For Cézanne's line took objective form.

Cézanne said in his theoretical revelations to Emil Bernard that, drawing and colour are not separate and distinct, as everything in nature has colour ... while one paints one draws, the more the colour harmonises, the more precise becomes the drawing. When the colour is rich, the form is at its height. The contrasts are relations of tone comprise the secret of drawing and form. The form and the contour of objects are conveyed to us through the opposition and contrast resulting from their individual colours.

Cézanne's theory did not hark upon drawing and line in terms of symbolic subjectivism, or even upon colour in the same terms. There can be no doubt that what Cézanne was writing about were symbols but they were the symbols of objective thought, that which concerned an objective understanding of the nature of reality, as he saw and understood it to be, it was not symbolism in the manner of Van Gogh.

Consider for a moment this important point of differentiation in terms of two ugly but descriptive definitions. The area of division between, Gauguin and Van Gogh on the one side, and Cézanne on the other, can be described as; in the first case, conceptual subjectivity, whilst Cézanne can be described as a conceptual objectivist. This differentiation describes his great importance to the foundation of Cubism. As Mondrian wrote in his essay 'Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art', the only problem in art is to achieve a balance between the subjective and the objective. But it is of the utmost importance that this problem should be solved in the realm of plastic art - technically as it were and not in the realm of thought. The work of art must be produced constructed'.

One must create as objectively as possible a representation of forms and relations.

He continued later with the following.

Since art is in essence universal, its expression cannot rest on a subjective view. Our human capacities do not allow of a perfectly objective view, but that does not imply that the plastic expression of art is based on a subjective conception. Our subjectivity realises but does not create the work.

In Cézanne's painting 'Montagne Sainte Victoire', his manner of painting the landscape as a multi-faceted recessional plane amply demonstrates the manner in which colour and tonal relationships can be employed to create line. The linear diagram 23 demonstrates some of the perceivable line/edges created by Cézanne in this painting. He also used vertical and horizontal brush strokes to create a very loose grid across the plane of the receding landscape to the foot of the mountain.



Both of these plastic techniques were important to the development of the plastic means of Cubism. But there were in Mondrian's personal development precedents for these same techniques, they can be seen in paintings of his Luminist period, but Cézanne created these means with objective intention.

The change in spatial thinking that took place, as expressed by Cubism, was a refutation of all previous concepts of pictorial spatial thinking. The main premises of this change was that of the relativity of space. An explanation of this change in the terms of art can be given in this way, it is that objects even though viewed from one side are only viewed relatively in terms of time and in reality their existence is in fact a multitude of possible viewpoints. The spatial problem that confronted Picasso and Braque was that the traditional methods of plastic spatial thinking did not allow for a multitudinal or relative viewpoint, but only for a determined static viewpoint even though various perspective positions could be taken up in this mode of object perception, as was demonstrated in Mondrian's series of paintings 'Farm at Duivendrecht', 1905-06. This traditional determinant pictorial means forced the artist to provide enough visual information through which the viewer could construct a static recessional horizontal plane upon which the objects could exist. The task of the Cubists including Mondrian from 1911 onwards, was to destroy this pictorial determinate.

As was shown in the previous section the changes that took place in painting out of which Post Impressionism developed had a number of external causes many of which were relatable to the scientific and quasi scientific theories of the time, and generally to philosophic theories, particularly those of Schopenhauer. Cubism also had a specific and general relationship to scientific and philosophic theory of the time. But it is not in the writings of Picasso that reference to these contemporary sources can be found, but it is in the writings

of Metzinger that the first references occurred. He began to write on the new painting during 1910<sup>(21)</sup> his first published article being 'note sur la peinture',<sup>(22)</sup>. In that article he wrote that the new painting 'broke with the Hellenic traditions', those outlined above in relation to space.<sup>(23)</sup>

The conceptual aspects of Cubism which confronted Mondrian in the Cubist paintings exhibited in Amsterdam in 1911 and in various modes of expression when he arrived in Paris, were recognised by Metzinger. First in his article of 1910, in which he said of Picasso's paintings, that they were,

the tangible equivalents of an idea, the image of its totality. Cézanne shows us the living form revealed by light, Picasso adds a material inventory of the intellectual existence, he establishes a free variable system of perspective ... to purely optical sensations he adds tactile sensations. (24)

The points made by Metzinger in his article were later reiterated and re-emphasised by the critics, especially Salmon, Apollinaire and Hourcade. A part of their emphasis stressed that Cubism was an art of realism, rather than of fantasy, but a realism based in intellectual knowledge of how things existed and not just a record of visual perception. These two factors, the first being of art based in reality and the second of the intellectual decision of depicting the objects of reality from differing viewpoints, must have clarified, for Mondrian, two issues with which he had been struggling for a number of years. There was in the preceding years of Mondrian's development a certain dichotomy, as has been shown. On the one side he had based his paintings in reality, represented by such paintings as 'Red cloud', of 1907, on the other side there was the fantasy aspect as represented by 'Printemps'. As he did not manage to resolve this two part problem during his Luminist period, it is likely that for Mondrian this represented a critical impasse in about 1911. In relation to this problem it should be remembered that Mondrian was during this period very deeply involved with Theosophy. Whilst some aspects of Theosophy were influential upon



the fantasy side of his art he was also influenced by that aspect of its teachings which stressed the need for an objective understanding of reality, and emphasised the need for communication of that understanding. Both in his letters and in the, 'Two sketch books', it can be seen that the dichotomy was the one that Mondrian was at this time most concerned to solve. It is therefore no wonder that he made his apparent rapid change of style, for as can be seen in his paintings of 1910/11, the problem of fantasy versus reality had become acute.

The nature of the problem with which Mondrian was grappling with can be described more accurately in abstract terms, a decision between relative objectivity or relative subjectivity, both sides in terms of the activity of art, containing elements of the other. John Golding<sup>(25)</sup> records in his study of Cubism, that the contemporary critic, Hourcade 'was the first of many writers to relate Cubist painting to Kantian Aesthetics'. Hourcade, used a quotation from Schopenhauer, 'Kant's greatest service was to distinguish between the appearance of a thing and the thing in itself and he showed that our intelligence stands between the thing and us'<sup>(26)</sup> A quotation that implies the problem of subjectivity versus objectivity.

Mondrian's preoccupation during this period was with two related modes of thought, a consideration of painting as a formal means of expressing reality, secondly with Theosophic thought. In this aspect of his mode of thinking, the same issues of relative position to an objective search through Theosophic teaching or subjective theosophic activity were present. The acceptance of the second of these possible modes would have led Mondrian towards ritualism and occult practices, but his letters, written notes and sketches prove that he chose the first path or mode of thought. Thereby his notated thoughts can be understood as having a philosophic and stylistic relationship to the writings of Spinoza.<sup>(27)</sup> as well as

to the more objective Theosophic propositions posited by Madame Blavatsky<sup>(28)</sup>. If the sketches, 'Dunes at Domburg', are considered in terms of their search for the essentials of reality through relative objectivity, it can be seen that in these sketches, made in 1911<sup>(29)</sup>, that Mondrian was deeply involved in abstracting the essential elements out of his perceptions, whilst searching at the same time for dynamic plastic elements. These sketches and the final rigour of 'Dune landscape', presented Mondrian with the tentative suggestion of an objective formal structure upon which he could begin to experiment, the impact of Cubist multi viewpoint faceted dynamics reinforced and consciously motivated this tentative solution.

Mondrian's arrival in Paris in early 1912 brought him into direct contact with Loedwijk Schelfhout at Rue de Depart. Schelfhout had established contact with the Cubist painters and theoreticians of the former Abbaye Cr teuil<sup>(30)</sup>. The group had in its beginnings, strong socialist/communist tendencies, its failure in terms of its original conception was due to a dogmatic Utopian stance. The stylistic foundations of the original Cr teuil artists had been symbolist. What Mondrian came into contact with in 1912 was the remnants of the defunct Abbaye which had moved from Cr teuil to Paris in 1907 manifesting as a review called 'Les bandeaux d'or', its co-editor was Joave, who made the journal available to the writers of the Section D'Or. The leaders and propagandists of the section being Gleizes and Metzinger, other members were Delauny and Le Fauconnier. In 1910 Le Fauconnier had painted a work that he entitled 'Le abondance', this was claimed by Gleizes and Metzinger to represent the true spirit of the social ideals propounded by the original Abbaye Cr teuil<sup>(31)</sup>.

In the correspondence referred to earlier, between Mondrian and Schelfhout, it was said that Mondrian had asked Schelfhout to go to 'Au Salon Automme'. Of Le Fauconnier's, Gleizes and



Metzinger's paintings in that exhibition Allard, the critic, wrote in L'Art Libre, that 'plastic art had been born that was no longer content to copy the occasional episode but which offered all of the essential elements of a synthetic experience taking place'.

Schelfhout's reply to Mondrian's request has not come to light, but it is likely that Schelfhout drew Mondrian's attention to the work of Gleizes, Metzinger and Fauconnier. It is therefore reasonable to speculate that the socio/Utopian idealism that became a strong aspect of Mondrian's, Van Doesburg's and the De Stijl Group's philosophy is partly traceable to the influence of the Post Cr teil artists and to the anarchist/socialist/communist milieu of the late nineteenth century Paris, as well as the idealistic socialists in the Netherlands; men such as the architect, H.P. Berlage.

In the Cubist movement in Paris, 1912, Mondrian would have observed two distinct branches, that of Picasso and Braque and that of the, Post Cr teil (Section/D'Or'). One of the most noticeable formal differences between these groups was in their treatment of space. The social conscience of the second group as epitomised by Le Fauconnier's painting 'Le abondance' 1910-11, led them to tackle subjects that communicated their social consciousness, sometimes necessitating vast panoramas of landscape which contained literary content as in the above painting. Picasso and Braque, on the other hand, restricted themselves to paintings of objects in a purely formal manner, tables, chairs and the like, all without literary intention. A comparison of the space used by Picasso and Braque with that of Le Fauconnier, shows that they created a much shallower space but one that was more complex in its simultaneous expression of differing viewpoints.

Mondrian, said that it was to Picasso and L ger that he was particularly drawn. Consider for example, L ger's painting of 1910 'Fumes sur les toits' the manner of its composition and the components of the composition, in a formal sense, have a great deal

in common with Mondrian's paintings of 1911/12 'Landscape with trees' and 'Landscape'. The dynamic rhythms and the faceted space created by both artists, which was articulated by line, tone and colour, were very similar in intention and depth. But in Mondrian's paintings a more obvious rectangular grid is discernable; see diagrams 24. It is therefore obvious that by this time Mondrian had a clear understanding of the manner in which the formal elements of Picasso's Cubist paintings were manipulated, that was through the use of the Cubist grid. In Picasso's work this had been fully developed by 1910. See for example, 'Portrait of Monsieur Kahnweiler' 1910. If this painting is considered with its accompanying diagrams 25, it will be seen that it can be split into three layers, the first or top one being made up of lines directly abstracted from sensible reality, the second layer consists of lines which are a synthesis of precept and concept, the third layer is a speculative projection of the second layer into a completed grid. Exactly the same layers were found to exist in the layer analysis of Mondrian's 'Still life with ginger pot 11' the diagrams of, 'Landscape with trees and landscape' reveals the same information.

This painting of Picasso's not only demonstrates the use of the grid structuring system but it is also a reasonable example of the depiction of a simultaneous multi viewpoint image, in addition the whole painting has a surface continuity, a development of the sort of 'all over', intensity that Cézanne achieved in his later paintings. This quality was one that Mondrian must have realised to be of great importance in the revelations of the Cubist experiments of Picasso, Léger and Braque, for on its successful achievement rests the success of a painting that is dynamically harmonious.

The name Kahnweiler like that of Apollinaire is almost synonymous with Cubism. Kahnweiler, a German, collected and dealt in the work of Picasso and Braque, but in addition to those activities he wrote and published a book on the history of the development of



Picasso's and Braque's work. His book was written in 1915 and called 'The rise of Cubism', in it Kahnweiler gave a deep insight into the development of their Cubism, noting all the important changes and giving a precise description of the manner in which objects were represented in space and space itself was rendered as the dimensional surface. He described that process in the following terms, in his book of 1920.<sup>(32)</sup>

Representation of the position of objects in space is done as follows: instead of beginning from a supposed foreground and going from there to give an illusion of depth by means of perspective, the painter begins from a definite and clearly defined background. Starting from this background the painter now works toward the front by a sort of scheme of forms in which each object's position is clearly indicated, both in relation to the definite background and to other objects. Such an arrangement thus gives a clear and plastic view. But, if only this scheme of forms were to exist it would be impossible to see in paintings the, 'representation', of things from the outer world. One would only see an arrangement of planes, cylinders, quadrangles etc. <sup>(33)</sup>

Kahnweiler then continued and made a most important connection, for through his knowledge of German Philosophy, he was able to relate the effects of the simultaneous image directly to the philosophy of Kant.

In the words of Kant, 'put together the various conceptions and comprehend their variety in one perception'<sup>(34)</sup>. What was also important in Kehnweiler's description was his recognition of the synthetic element that evolved in Cubist Art. As Kahnweiler correctly observed, the process of synthesis was an objective intention.

The grid structure which is perceivable in Picasso's painting and in Mondrian's earliest Cubist painting was, 'the necessary condition for all objective perception'<sup>(35)</sup> Given that this is valid, then it can be seen that throughout Mondrian's career, prior to 1912, that he had continually attempted to objectively perceive reality. For as was demonstrated diagrammatically in relation to many of the works of his Hague School period of Impressionist painting, he continually attempted to objectify his perceptions. This urge gave

to that period of work a paradoxical quality, for on the one hand his works resulted from an inductive empirical approach whilst there was also an underlying quality of deductive objectivity. One of the reasons therefore why Mondrian was able to make such a rapid progress in his Cubist experiment was his ability to synthesise the influences of Picasso, Braque and Léger with the influence of his own previously established, objectification of his perception of landscape and other objects.

Mondrian, in his last essay, 'Towards the true vision of reality' wrote reflectively of this period in the following manner about his attitude to the importance of Cubism.

It was during this early period of experiment that I first went to Paris. This time was around 1910 when Cubism was in its beginnings. I admired Matisse, Van Dongen and the other Fauves, but I was immediately drawn to the Cubists, especially Picasso and Léger. Of all the abstractionists (Kadinsky and the Futurists) I felt that only the Cubists had discovered the right path; and for a time I was much influenced by them. (36).

These contemporary influences played an important part in assisting Mondrian in resolving the direction that his art would take.

The critic, Guillaume Apollinaire in his book, 'Les peintres Cubistes', has much the same to say as Kahnweiler, in his study Apollinaire placed the work of the Cubists definitely within the traditions of objective painting, as had Gleizes and Metzinger in 1912.

For Mondrian the influence of not only the Cubist painters but the theoreticians must have been very significant, Apollinaire stressed that the motivation of the young painters was the secret search for pure painting. That the Cubists work was shown to exist within areas of metaphysical intention was no doubt of great significance in Mondrian's rapid identification with the groups of artists that formed the Parisian Cubist movement. He wrote in his 'two sketch books', on the same subject as that discussed by Apollinaire, he indicated his identification with the Cubist movement



during 1912 to 1913.

The inner image is formed in our souls. The image is what we must render through form. For in nature the surface of things is beautiful, but its imitation is lifeless. The objects give us everything, but their definition gives us nothing. Art was always too concerned with imitation despite the artist's good intentions. In speaking about the impulse in the spirit of the age towards spiritual art, one must carefully take into consideration that this word, "spiritual" has a comprehensive meaning. The spiritual (i.e. super sensory: alternatively metaphysical) has many degrees; thus the term, "spiritual", is used both for the scale of degrees away from the physical towards the spirit, but also only for the spiritual proper.<sup>(37)</sup>

The form of art that had in a few short years been created by the Cubists, especially Picasso, Braque, Léger, Gleizes and Metzinger, was an art based on a balance between abstraction and representation. It had become an activity that intensified what can be termed Cézanne's concept of an active perceptive mind, as against what he considered as the Impressionist passive perceptive mind. In adopting and exemplifying this conception, the Cubists had managed to achieve the elements of simultaneity and relativity into their work. They had broken with the formal painting constructs of the past and by so doing had destroyed the necessity of illusionistic object appearances, which was manifest in the work of the Impressionists.

The general conception of Cubism was not of a geometric art but of an art of realism: Geometry was a tool in the process of active perception, a process stimulated by conception and which in turn created intuitions and thereby concepts. In his essay, 'Towards the true vision of Reality', Mondrian wrote reflectively claiming the mantle of Realism for all of his work, 'I was always a Realist', he said. He never considered his art as geometric. This claim is important if an understanding of the real underlying basis of Mondrian's art is to be gained. For as the diagrams of Mondrian's work and that of Picasso's demonstrate there is a perceivable relationship between the Cubist structure and the Neo Plastic structure. In the structure of Cubism Mondrian identified some of the universals for which he searched.



One aim of the Cubist artists was to create a pure art, e.g. an art that did not express the sensory appearance of reality. This aim can be seen as the cause of the split in the development of Cubism, for out of Cubism, Surrealism developed, a subjective art form, another development the one with which this study is concerned was the evolution of Neo plasticism. In the years prior to the First World War 1911 to 1914 Mondrian tested the problem of what he termed the 'naturalism of Cubism', which emphasised the definition of singular objects. He found that the naturalistic emphasis acted as a barrier to what he understood, as the logical evolution of Cubism. Therefore, during what can be termed Mondrian's post Cubist phase, 1914/15 to 1917, he slowly discarded all the elements of naturalism or singular objects, in preference for what he had discovered to be the universal symbols of the plastic structure of reality. The nature of these symbols will be considered in chronological order.

Apollinaire recognised in Mondrian's paintings, which were exhibited at the Salon in 1913, the quality of abstractness that was developing in his work. 'March 18th 1913. Through the Salon des Independants' (38)

The highly abstract Cubism of Mondrian, a Dutchman, (we know that Cubism has penetrated the museum in Amsterdam, while in France our young painters are being ridiculed in Amsterdam, they are exhibiting the works, Picasso, etc. next to those of Rembrandt). Mondrian an offshoot of the Cubists, is certainly not their imitator. He seems to have been influenced above all by Picasso, but his personality has remained wholly his own. His trees and his portrait of a woman reveal an intellectual sensibility. This kind of Cubism is heading in a direction different from that currently pursued by Braque and Picasso, whose experiments with materials are proving extremely interesting.

Apollinaire then continued to discuss the painting of two other Paris based Dutch artists, both friends of Mondrian's, Loedwijk Schelfhout and Petrus Alma, with whom Mondrian frequently conversed during this period, directly and in letter form as has in the case of Schelfhout already been shown.



Louis (Loedwijk) Schelfhout's Provençal Landscape, a powerful and well balanced canvas. This imaginary landscape appears more real than many, a study done from nature. Alma - a Dutchman like Van Gogh, whose temperament he shares to a degree; his small landscape has great delicacy in its greys and greens. His painting is serious and passionate.

The sort of painting to which Apollinaire possibly referred is here illustrated<sup>(39)</sup>. 'Road in Provence', 1912. The influence of Cézanne upon Schelfhout is immediately apparent, but in addition it also has certain similarities to Cubist landscape paintings by Picasso in 1909. In addition in Schelfhout's painting, can be seen the influence of Derain. It would appear therefore that although knowledgeable about the rise of Cubism in Paris that Loedwijk Schelfhout was not as deeply involved in its conceptual basis as was his friend, neighbour and colleague, Mondrian. A comparison of his Landscape with two of Mondrian, illustrated and considered earlier in diagram form, 'Landscape with trees' 1911/12 and 'Landscape' 1911/12, reveals the difference, for whereas in Mondrian's paintings there is a perceivable underlying structural grid, there is no such perceivable structure to be seen in Schelfhout's painting. His conception of the landscape was as Apollinaire said, 'imaginary'. He used line to describe singular imaginary objects, in much the same manner as Derain. Mondrian's two landscapes and his still life paintings were based upon a more structured concept of the way a perception could be expressed.

In Mondrian's procedure, as the diagrams suggest, he tested his perception against a predetermined conceptual structure, this resulted in a synthesis of both as his paintings show.

The portrait of a woman, painted and exhibited by Mondrian, to which Apollinaire made reference in his article, is catalogued as, 'Figure study', but it is known to have had as its subject the wife of the minor Dutch artist Otto van Rees, Adya, who was also a painter. This couple were involved during this part of the century with many aspects of the development of the main streams of

twentieth century art<sup>(40)</sup>. There were in fact two paintings derived from figures painted by Mondrian during this period 1911/12, both of which were in the collection of S.B. Slijper and were subsequently bequeathed to the Gemeente Museum. What is immediately apparent is the complete change of palette that Mondrian employed for these two works, for he reduced his colours to almost black and white variations and gradations. Another point that is important to note with regard to these two paintings, is the 'all over', paint treatment that Mondrian gave to both works. The paint is hatched in the manner of Cézanne's case, arbitrary, nor was its use in the instance of Mondrian. The changes of direction in the hatchings were used by both men to describe changes of similar plane in a definitive manner. Although Picasso used a similar method, again in his instance it is relatable to Cézanne, Picasso's use was differently intentioned to Mondrian's. Compare for example, Picasso's 'Seated woman', 1909 with Mondrian's, 'Nude'. It can be seen that whereas Mondrian's hatching and structuralism tends to determine a shallow space, one in which the planes used to describe the figure blend into the space in a flat manner, creating a space in which it is hard to conceive of a real physical body. Picasso's painting, although intentioned from the same general motives, appears to create volume in a relatively more sensible space, for he employed his structure and hatching to create angular oblique planes, thus giving greater depth and projection to the figure. As Apollinaire stated Mondrian's were considerably more abstract paintings, whilst Picasso's work can be seen to retain a relatively closer relationship to sensible reality. In his essay of 1937, 'Plastic Art and Pure Plastic Art', Mondrian cited his criticism of Cubism as being its fundamental kinship with Naturalism; i.e. sensible reality.



'Since Cubist art is still fundamentally naturalistic, the break which pure plastic art has caused consists in becoming abstract, instead of naturalistic in essence.'

The abstract quality of Mondrian's earliest Cubist paintings, recognised, in my opinion, so importantly by Apollinaire, was the most crucial difference between Mondrian's work and that of Picasso. This difference enabled Apollinaire to identify Picasso's influence but to say that Mondrian's 'personality had remained wholly his own'. Mondrian's personality sought for things that Picasso's personality did not, for the urge towards abstraction in the definitive sense of Mondrian was not Picasso's intention, nor does it appear that his personality stimulated this sort of intention, rather it motivated Picasso towards retaining and developing a coefficient of sensible reality.

The objects that Mondrian selected to paint continued a relationship with his own former interests, as has been shown in the case of his still life paintings. Apollinaire commented upon Mondrian's Cubist tree, once again the theme of the tree can be traced back through his earlier work. There were in Mondrian's view very strong personal and objective reason for selecting only one tree or one flower, a point that he made in reflection in 1942, again in his essay, 'Towards the true vision of Reality'.

'I enjoyed painting flowers, not bouquets, but a single flower at a time, in order that I might better express its plastic structure. My environment conditioned me to paint the objects of my ordinary vision.' (41)

The 'Tree', exhibited at the Salon des Independents was a part of the continuation of a major theme of Mondrian's Luminist period, see 'Red tree' 1908. In that painting he had achieved a colouration that was synthetic and conceptual, he had also managed to create a quality of shallow space and surface rhythm, all elements that he reconsidered in the single tree series of 1912. This series began

in 1910 and lasted until 1913, if Seuphor's dating is correct, when it culminated in 'Oval composition', 1913<sup>(42)</sup>. I am inclined in the light of the evidence of the dates of 'the two sketch books'. to consider that the date of 1911 is the correct date for the beginnings of this series. The issue though is secondary to the importance of the work and Mondrian's development of abstraction, that which can be seen and traced in this series. It commenced as did all of Mondrian's major series with sketches, in charcoal or pencil from observed reality, see, 'Tree' sketch 1912. The process of abstracting or testing his perception against a conceptual structure then took place, see 'Tree' sketch 1912. This process led to and culminated in a painting such as 'Flowering apple tree', 1912, this was in itself a step further in the process of developing abstraction for prior to painting, 'Flowering apple tree', Mondrian had to paint, 'The grey tree', 1912. In the second version 'Flowering apple tree', it can be seen that the trunk and boughs of the observed object have become, to even greater degree, integrated with the conceptual structure, and its consequent space. The lines which in the first version 'The grey tree', can be related through sensible memory to the boughs of the tree as depicted in, 'Tree 11' 1912, Mondrian broke up and dispersed across the entirety of the pictorial area. These he carefully integrated with underlying rectangular grid. The concept of a 90° rectangular grid system Mondrian had come to believe was the fundamental system through which an active objectification of sensible reality could be determined. This belief was given verbal exposition firstly in the written notes of the 'two sketch books', where it takes form as the theory of opposites.

Since the male principle is the vertical line, a man shall recognise this element in the ascending trees of the forest, he sees his compliment in the horizontal line of the sea. The women with horizontal lines as characteristic element, recognises herself in the recumbent lines of the sea and sees herself complimented in the vertical lines of the forest.' (43)



Mondrian's concept of the symbolism of the vertical and horizontal lines, as above expressed, is traceable to the meaning of the Egyptian Tau, the fundamental symbol of Ancient Geometry from which all the other geometric forms were derived. The Tau was the fundamental metaphysical symbol in which the perpendicular was known as the descending male ray or spirit, the horizontal lines symbolising matter or the female ray<sup>(44)</sup>. The underlying grid that Mondrian developed as the basic structure of his Cubist painting was not merely a formal device or tool, it had a dual function being both a formal tool and a symbolic one, for in its second mode it expresses the necessity of positive and negatives, of male and female or spirit and matter, being essential to reality and also without which the appearances of reality would not be possible. If therefore 'Flowering apple tree' can be perceived in the second mode, it can be understood as being completely interrelated to its revealed primal essence, that of male and female.

(5) The main subjects of Mondrian's work during his Cubist and Post Cubist phase were, still lifes, figures, landscapes, woods, trees, single trees, church and building facades, including rooftops, the sea, ocean and piers, compositions based on trees, compositions based on buildings, and compositions based on the sea, ocean and piers. The reason for calling one section Post Cubist is based on the quality of abstractness that Mondrian achieved in those works made after 'Composition in oval', 1914 and up to, 'Composition with colour planes', 1917. The quality of abstractness achieved during the years 1914-1917 was partly caused by Mondrian's attitude to space and his intention to destroy any pictorial indications of sensible space for the sake of purity. He wrote about the problem of space in the following manner.

The attitude of the Cubists to the representation of volume in space was contrary to my conception of abstraction, which was based on the belief that this very thing has to be destroyed, as a consequence I came to the destruction of volume by the use of the plane. This I accomplished by means of lines cutting the planes.(45).

In the year 1912 Mondrian began to call paintings compositions, the first of these were 'Composition tree 1 and 11'. These two paintings moved even further into the realms of abstraction than had done any previous work, such as 'Flowering apple tree' of the same year. The first of these two compositions was painted very loosely, it has thereby a fresh quality similar to a sketch, but is in fact a finely balanced three tone painting. One in which Mondrian used white as the projectional plane, upon which, the mid tone could articulate space and black could be used as line. What remains of the subject in terms of sensible reality, is a sense of vertical and linear spatial movement. The quality of volume he destroyed and by so doing the properties of mass and weight were removed. If compared with 'The grey tree' of the same year, one can understand the speed with which Mondrian was moving towards complete abstraction.

The second version 'Composition trees 11', 1912 is more spatially complex, this is due to the use of four tones by Mondrian and a more faceted all over surface. The planes, as in No. 1 move from the lightest to the second mid tone, whilst black was once again employed as line that divided the planes and accentuated their oblique positions. The result was a shallow multi faceted volume, but it was a volume that in terms of sensible reality was unknowable. It was an abstract volume knowable only through thought. As in all of Mondrian's previously finished Cubist paintings there is the same perceivable grid structure present. The essential structure integrated with the abstracted results of perceptual response, a conclusion arrived at through a continuing process of abstracting in sketch and preliminary study form.



The 'all over' quality that Mondrian immediately achieved in his Cubist painting was the result of conscious intention. But it also had its experimental precedents in his Luminist paintings. For example a painting such as 'Dune landscape', achieved a sense of an 'all over rhythm'. What the term 'all over' refers to is the quality in these works that acknowledges the potential tactility of the canvas, lines or hatched paint play a dual role one which gives life to the real surface. Another example of this quality can be perceived in 'Dune III' of 1909.

'Dune landscape' is considered by some to be a form of Cubism. Possibly 'Evolution' could be classed under the same heading if the viewers also consider Loedwijk Schelfhout's 'Road in Provence' a Cubist work. But in terms of Mondrian's objective Cubist viewpoint, or conception of a viewing process, both of these paintings lack the layered realities of the cubist paintings. What they did though, was to predict the need for such an objectification. By bringing these earlier paintings into comparative view it is intended to reiterate the experimental and synthetic nature of Mondrian's evolution as a painter and artist, throughout every period so far considered.

The methodical manner in which Mondrian experimented during his Cubist phase was meticulously controlled, which was the reason for the limited number of subjects. The series of Cubist trees, which forms numerically the greatest amount of Mondrian's work during this period, assisted him in experimenting with the development of pictorial harmony. As has been shown the paintings of this period can be divided into structural layers for the purposes of analysis. The problem, was to harmoniously unite the results of perception with the conceptual determinates. In 1912-13 Mondrian added to his work one further formal element, one that has often been linked to the direct influence of Picasso and Braque, it was the oval see 'Oval composition tree' 1913 and Picassos' 'L'homme à

la pipe' 1911. But before accepting this source of influence as being true there are a number of points that need to be considered, they are important to note for they demonstrate the multiplicity of process involved in Mondrian's evolution.

Mondrian consciously recognised that he was a part of the evolution of the art of painting, by so doing he recognised the nature of his own evolution as that of being an artist who was logically evolving towards a more spiritual art through the process of abstraction, an art that did not deny matter but recognised and expressed its primal essence. In the 'two sketch books', the search for the essence of observed objects can be understood to have been the only general motivation for all of the sketches and it also forms the basis for the written notes. The oval form can be found throughout the sketch books, which were made whilst Mondrian was at Domburg during the summer of 1912. Although Mondrian had probably seen examples of Picasso's oval form prior to this date, the sketch book shows that he determined the form through his synthetic process of structural conceptualism and perception. For this form and its perceptual precedents can be traced back through Mondrian's work to such drawings as 'Farm with trees and water' of 1906, also 'On the Amstel' of the same year. Once again the same sort of perception occurred in 'Sea after sunset' 1909. The possible nature of this perceptual construct will be considered later. Prior to that and to complete the third of the precedents for the oval form it is necessary to consider the possible influence of another of Mondrian's preoccupations, that of Theosophy<sup>(46)</sup>. The general direct influence of Theosophy was to inspire Mondrian to search for an art that was expressive of the great universals. The oval form could be thought of in the terms of Theosophy, as being symbolic of the mundane egg or the universal womb<sup>(47)</sup>. This symbol could have been adopted and reconstructed by Mondrian due to its universal meaning, in that it must necessarily contain the essentials



of male and female. This speculation may seem to be too extreme but there is ample evidence of Mondrian's very deep involvement with Theosophy contained in his correspondence with H.P. Bremmer and Loedwijk Schelfhout. His correspondence with Bremmer began in 1914 with a letter dated 8th April 1914, 26 Rue de Depart, Paris, in which he wrote to Bremmer in the following manner,

I have been asked by the editor of, ("Theosophia") to write about art and thought it is outside my line, I thought that here it was more, ("scientific") and so I have done it and exposed my ideas. My idea of Evolution in art quite corresponds with theosophical thinking.

To Loedwijk Schelfhout he wrote on the 12th June 1914 from Paris: 'But that does not alter the fact that I think the theory (doctrine) of theosophy quite right and that it leads to clarity in spiritual development.'

Mondrian also wrote in his letter of 29th January 1914, to Bremmer about his admiration for Picasso.

Finally, I must tell you, that I was influenced by seeing Picasso's work, which I greatly admire. I'm not ashamed of mentioning this influence, for I think it greater to be open to improvement, than be content with a once found imperfection, thinking that you are more original that way.' - like many painters think.'

This statement can be understood as having been influenced by Theosophy, of a continual learning and searching process towards spiritual consciousness. From Mondrian's 'two sketch books', 'there are two paths leading to the spiritual; the path of learning, of direct exercises, (meditation), and the slow certain path of evolution. The latter manifests itself of art.'<sup>(48)</sup>.

As with the grid structure discussed earlier, the cause or reason for Mondrian's use of the oval form was the result of a threefold influence.

During the summer of 1912, Mondrian returned to Domburg, it was during that visit that he began to make the first sketches that would result in the famous series of 'Pier and ocean' works, leading to what are sometimes termed the 'plus and minus' works. This series of works can definitely be termed Post Cubist, and in fact formed the



chronological link between Mondrian's Cubist works and his first Neo plastic paintings, such a painting as 'Composition with colour planes' 1917.

At Domburg during these summers just prior to the First World War, there was, as there had been in 1908-09, a considerable milieu of artists of modernist tendencies. For example Jacoba van Hemskerck, Otto van Rees and his wife Adya, Charlie Toorop, the daughter of Jan Toorop. It was, as can be seen in Tepstra's book, Jacoba van Hemskerck whose work had most in common with Mondrian's. She too, became involved in the Cubist experiment. Their work was exhibited in Brussels and then at Berlin at the first Deutsche Herbstsalon in 1913, an exhibition organised by Herwarth Walden.

Mondrian's search for dynamic surface tension in which the object was abstracted to the point in which it was totally integrated with the structuralised space again formed the main motivation of the paintings entitled 'Composition tree'. Two significant examples of this search are 'Composition 1 tree' and 'Composition 3 tree', both were executed in 1913. In terms of painterly treatment these two paintings have much in common with the two previously discussed the 'Composition trees' paintings. In both instances there are direct links with drawn studies, in the first instance 'Wood 1912' and in the instance of the later paintings and 'Tree study 1' 1912 and 'Tree study 11' 1913.

The experimental relationships between these two pairs of paintings is immediately obvious and amplifies the meticulous quality of the search in which Mondrian was engaged during this period. The second of the two pairs of paintings are interesting to compare with Léger's 'Contrastes des formes', 1913. In Léger's painting, cylindrical forms were contrasted one against the other creating a dynamic rhythmic space, planes were used to create solid volume lines, were used to give directional movement to the planear volumes in space. The difference to be seen in the case of Mondrian's



paintings was that he used line and plane but with another intention, he used them to articulate space but not to create volume, the similarities and dissimilarities between Léger's and Mondrian's intentions and resulting paintings exist in these terms. Whilst Léger's description of interpenetrating volumes in space achieved a considerable simultaneity of differing viewpoints, Mondrian's intentions whilst achieving the same general sense of dynamism achieved a relatively restricted number of viewpoints, or quality in which the simultaneous presentation of viewpoints was subjugated to that of a dynamic shallow space.

It is also instructive to compare Mondrian's paintings of this period with those of the Amsterdam based artist, Leo Gestel. Tepstra makes the point in her study that all the members of the group of 'Modern Artists', in the Netherlands were influenced during this period by the 'events', in the Parisian art world and she recorded that Gestel also visited Paris to examine this phenomena, she also made a distinction between the nature of the work of the Domburg/Parisian artists, whose leader, if only by achievement, was Mondrian and the Amsterdam/Parisian artists whose work was well represented by Leo Gestel. Although the Amsterdammers as represented by Gestel were influenced by Cubism, they and especially Gestel, became involved with the influence of Futurism, the Italian Futurists having explosively manifested their art in Paris during 1912.

In 1911, Leo Gestel executed a painting called 'Forest' that he was deeply involved with Luminism is immediately obvious, in this style he created dynamic movement in shallow space, thereby allowing an all over surface tactility to develop. The change that took place in his work between 1911 and 1913 can be seen if his painting 'Forest', is compared with a work of 1913 'Women between flowers' which shows two main influences, those of Cubism and Futurism. Gestel's intention appears to have been to synthesise these two forces in one painting. The critics in Amsterdam considered that Gestel had through this synthesis



of Cubism and Futurism created a lyrical abstraction and an expression of psychological forces.

In his first letter to H.P. Bremmer, Mondrian expressed his views on Futurism. The letter is dated 29th January 1914. 'Futurism, though one step further than naturalism, occupies itself too much with human sensations'. Earlier in the same paragraph Mondrian had expressed his personal reasons for suppressing such qualities as follows.

By not wanting to tell or say something human, by absolute negation (ignoring) of one's self, there arises in the work of art what is a monument of beauty: above all things human, still the most human in its depths and universality. For me it is an ascertained fact that this is an art for the future.

The paragraph ends with an important critical statement about Cubism and secondarily about Futurism. It also gives an indication of the conscious change that Mondrian was undergoing.

Cubism (that in its purport is still based too much on earlier products of beauty and thereby is less of this day than Futurism) has taken the big step to the abstract and therefore it is of this age and of the coming age: not so in its purport, but in its effect it is modern.

I for one, count myself not among either of them, but I feel the spirit of the age in both and in myself.

Apollinaire had predicted that the logic of Cubism was abstraction in the sense that Mondrian was seeking it. The propagandists, Gleizes and Metzinger, retreated from this development and expressed a need for a, 'co-efficient of realism', understood by Mondrian as naturalism. The property of psychology to be seen in Metzinger's and Gestel's Cubofuturist paintings were attacked by Mondrian. He carried out this attack by applying criteria that had its roots in Theosophical teaching. Mondrian believed that emphasis on the psychological was a reference to the subjective, to the sensual. This in Theosophical teaching was a barrier to spiritual transcendency and was rooted in the 'first stage'. Mondrian's personal aim and his dream for art was that it should transcend base sensuality (and this is a Theosophically based analogy) to the third plane, that of spiritual enlightenment. In terms of Mondrian's view of the evolution of art both Cubism and Futurism lacked objectivity, the first because of its emphasis on singular



objects, the second, Futurism, because of its emphasis on psychological expression.

During his visits to Domburg at this time Mondrian began to work upon another major subject source. It commenced with some sketches of the church at Domburg, when compared with his meticulous drawing of the same subject in 1909, and his painting of 1910/11 his complete change of intention in a few years can be seen. The sketches of the church examine and explore not only the abstraction of the 'essentials', from the building itself but also possible compositional relationships. As with the tree series of sketches, Mondrian tested the abstracted essentials found in his perceptions, within the framework of his developing conceptualised oval and rectangular formats. The oval form and rectangular grid formation, as has been previously suggested, must have held symbolic meaning for Mondrian. This lasted consciously in his work from 1912 to 1917, see, 'Composition with lines', 1917. These forms existed for Mondrian in a dual manner, thus, as his work developed and his theories took verbalised form, his concept of unified duality became a necessary part of his whole activity.

With his return to Paris from his summer visit to Domburg in 1913, the sketches of the church at Domburg changed into sketches of Parisian roof tops, church facades and demolished buildings. This secondary change of subject matter was important because the greater diversity of rectangular structuralism to be perceived in the buildings provided for Mondrian perceptual constructs that assisted him in breaking the problem of layered paintings. The sort of layering that has been suggested, existed in his paintings based on abstractions from trees and still lifes. With a building as a source, its perception and Mondrian's structural concept structure could be more easily and completely integrated in one main plane; see 'Church at Domburg', 1914. Although, Mondrian made a considerable number of references to physical reality, (the church) it can be seen that he completely integrated his structural concept with these references.

His attempt to achieve this complete synthesis had commenced in 1913 in the two works 'Composition in oval' 1913, one in charcoal one in oil. The elements of structure employed to create these works can be seen to be interchanged in spatial position across the surface.

With the change of subject matter Mondrian also altered his palette, he returned once more to the sort of palette and colour values that he had evolved during his Luminist period, pastel blues, pinks and oranges, either predominated or were intermingled with high value earth colours; see for example 'Oval composition with bright colours', 1913.

Mondrian's return to the modulation of primary colours in 1913/14 was for him an important step for by so doing, he clarified one point that would be fundamental to the foundations of Neo plasticism. As had been shown earlier Mondrian read the work of Rudolf Steiner, who lectured throughout Europe and who had a very considerable influence upon the major movements of twentieth century painting which were developing in Germany. He especially influenced Wassily Kandinsky<sup>(49)</sup> Steiner in 1907 organised at Munich the International Congress of the Theosophical Society. Into the agenda of this congress he introduced artistic activities. This was a break with the traditions of the Theosophical Society, and was obviously an important step for artists with Theosophical interests like those of Mondrian's. It could well have had a significant effect upon his decision in 1909 to become a member of the society, a decision that had taken Mondrian almost ten years to reach.

Steiner in the very early days of the Cubist experiment had realised that it was an art form that 'shifted attention to an examination of the structure of things seen and to the space they inhabit'. He, like Apollinaire, also realised that Cubism would logically or in evolutionary terms yield to abstraction. The basis of abstract art as predicted by Steiner was that it would be an art that explored 'the structure of the picture itself and the modulation of this space through means of colour into a vehicle for rendering more



intellectual emotions. (50)

Steiner's attitude to colour was based on the teachings of Goethe, those expressed in his 'Farbenlehre'. In that study and seminal work, Goethe declared that red, yellow and blue were the elementary colours. These were the primaries that Mondrian adopted, as against the red, yellow and green of Seurat's optically based colour system. Goethe then proved that from his primaries, violet, orange and green could simply be mixed. Goethe also propounded the theory of the sensual and moral effects of colour, his diagram of the symbolic effects and meaning of colour was important to all of the development of colour theory. No doubt Mondrian would have been well aware, probably through the influence of Steiner, of this diagram and its symbolic terminology. Its symbolic meaning also has much in common with the symbolic use of colours developed by Theosophists such as Leadbetter and Besant referred to earlier.

Mondrian found in the essential ideology of the Cubist doctrine the concept of objectivity. Colour had been considered by Seurat in an objective manner, but his later usage and his consequent influence had lead colour usage towards subjectivism, to the expression of sensory expression and psychological states. Steiner propounded the objective understanding and use of colour.

But when people speak of the qualities of colour itself, they refer only to the subjective impression. Then they look around for something else that is objective and in doing so they wander far away from colour. For in conjuring up all these other vibrations nothing is left of the real stuff of our world of colour. In order to grasp colour objectively we must try to keep within the world of colour itself and not leave it, then we may hope to penetrate its real nature. (51).

Steiner continued in this group of lectures, which were derived from his notebooks and teaching over many preceding years, to extol the concept of colour as the living image of the soul.

In Mondrian's 'two sketch books', it can be seen that his thinking not only in terms of the sketches but in terms of his developing philosophy was deeply involved with the sort of propositions propounded by Goethe and Steiner, for example he wrote:

'Art and reality -

it has no direct rapport with reality. Between the physical and the ethereal spheres; there is a boundary, clearly delimited for our senses, yet the ether penetrates the physical sphere and acts upon it. In this manner the artistic sphere pervades reality: but for our senses, the spiritual and the material. In order to approach the spiritual in art, one employs reality as little as possible because reality is the polar opposite of the spiritual. This explains logically why primary forms are employed.' (52).

If primary forms are necessary then for Mondrian, they must logically have necessitated primary colours. Mondrian had then by 1914 realised the 'logical evolution', of Cubism, that of abstraction, by so doing he had realised that it would entail the exploration and the spatial modulation of the picture itself. This exploration could be achieved through the synthesis of a conceptual framework and the constructs of perception.

(6) In 1913, Mondrian met Jacob Van Domselaar,<sup>(53)</sup> a Dutch composer. They became close friends and Mondrian had a considerable influence upon the compositional structure of Van Domeslaar's work. It was during this period that the work of the Parisian Dutch Artists began to have a considerable influence in the Netherlands and other centres such as Berlin and even in Prague, where Mondrian participated in the exhibition 'Art Moderne Parisien'. Mondrian also sent work to the Moderne Kunst Kring where it was reviewed by the critic Steenhoff in 'De Amsterdammer', in which he referred to Mondrian as the 'most Modern', of the Dutch artists, but he continued with the proviso 'that he was afraid of such an excessive thinning of Mondrian's work that only emptiness would be the result.'<sup>(54)</sup>

It is quite clear from this that Steenhoff had no understanding of what it was that he was confronted with and certainly did not understand Mondrian's work within the sort of general abstract art terms propounded by Rudolf Steiner. Mondrian writing to Bremmer from Paris on 21st March 1914 wrote about Steenhoff's comments. 'Also after the commendation of Steenhoff, but he seems not to care about me any longer, since I differ too much in my art from his views.' Mondrian



asked Bremmer if he could help him to get some copying work. It was through this sort of work that for the most part that Mondrian had to earn his living for many years. Throughout the letters there is continual reference to copying and to difficult financial circumstances. 'The reason for my request is that I can't make headway in selling my work ---- P.S. I could make microscopic drawings, because I did them for Prof. V. Calcar at Leiden at one time!'

During 1914 Bremmer managed to persuade the Hague art dealer Walrecht to exhibit some of Mondrian's paintings, as Joosten records in his Documentation. The overriding content of this early correspondence with Bremmer is of impoverishment and humility, for what Mondrian wrote to Bremmer at the end of his letter of the 21st gives a clear insight into the humble side of Mondrian's nature.

I am sorry I take so much of your time in making you think about all this, but I was pressed because of my need and because people told me that you had much influence at the Hague. It is against my character to trouble people, I hope you will excuse me.

In his next letter Mondrian told to Bremmer that he would send fifteen paintings to the Walrecht Gallery for exhibition, which was planned to take place during June of 1914. This exhibition was reviewed twice by the critic, Plasschaert, first on 26th June 1914. His reviews give an indication of the state of misunderstanding of Mondrian's work during this period. The first of these reviews was typical of the sort of reviews that many modern artists received.

It is easy to joke about this work. You may do this when you are not convinced of the painters seriousness. To me, the case seems more hopeless, more sad. These 'compositions', are the result of a self-excitement out of control. Mondrian has never been a forceful personality, rather an easily taken along man. By this quality he has come to this work here, that sometimes looks like lead - lined panes, sometimes butterfly wings with little colour, that is seemingly decorative, but in reality misses altogether the primary quality of rightly filled planes.

In his second review on the 12th July 1914, Plasschaert continued his attack, first by describing what he considered to be the criteria of a good painting.

A good painting is a complete total in itself; it wants to fill the plane within that frame; that is to say filling in the one way that is full of zest. Among other things this is not the case with Mondrian. The filling is no good; and the possibility for the mind to see in the colours all kinds of things that evoke its life and so on evoking is missing. The work that he is showing here is restless, and at the same time without evoking power. It is not coarse, that is the only thing that can be said in its favour --- these last 'compositions', are exaggerations in spirit, but seriously intended exaggerations of a weak person ---. These attempts may become a self destruction without glory.'

Plasschaert's attempts to bury Mondrian quite obviously failed. Firstly of course because Mondrian was a much stronger personality than he estimated him to be.. The second reason was because Plasschaert quite obviously had no understanding of what Mondrian was attempting, which suggests that he had not read or that he disagreed with H.P. Bremmer's writings about Mondrian published in Bremmer's magazine 'Plastic Art'.

In a letter to Bremmer dated Paris, April 14th 1914, Mondrian wrote,

'To my mind the article is just right and I think it a true comfort that somebody has this opinion on art. I don't understand why this is so rare, especially in Holland.'

During June of 1914, Loedwijk Schelfhout again made contact with Mondrian. Their friendship had become strained owing to some artisitic infighting with Conrad Kickert. This clash with Kickert had made it impossible for Mondrian to visit Le Fauconnier's studio, where the artists of the Post Cr teil (the Section D'Or) met. Schelfhout's contact must have been important for Mondrian, since Kickert had put it about that Mondrian was becoming a recluse and even, as can be learned from a letter to Schelfhout dated 12th June 1914, that he had ceased to work. He defended his position and his activity in the following sentences, 'I was seriously occupied in search but had not too much to show'. Apart from the medning of friendship the reason for Schelfhout's correspondence appears to have been to send some money to Mondrian to aid his impoverished circumstances.



(7) During the August of 1914 Mondrian was recalled by his family to Holland where his father had been taken seriously ill with the outbreak of the First World War he was advised and persuaded not to return to Paris. He went, after visiting his father, to Domburg and continued with his work, the 'pier and ocean', 'sea and church facades', series.

The last painting as such before Mondrian commenced upon what has come to be known as his plus and minus works appears to have been 'Oval composition tableau 111' 1914, although it is more likely that he was at work on several paintings during weeks prior to his exhibition at the Walrecht Gallery. These paintings were all based on the facade sketches and their development.

For almost three years, from 1914, Mondrian appears to have ceased using colour, except in one oil work 'Composition' 1916, and some of the works in the, 'Pier and ocean', series in which he employed coloured inks. This sudden shift could have been caused by a reaction to Plasschaert's accusation of negative decorativeness, or it could have been caused by a lack of money with which to purchase paint. A third reason and it was most likely that it was the prime reason was the nature of the search with which Mondrian was at that time concerned, for as was suggested earlier, it appears that whenever Mondrian reached a peak of achievement in any given style, he consciously altered his stylistic development to search for factors that had not been made apparent in the success of the previous works. It could well be that he felt the beauty created through a fine use of colour of the period 1913 to 1914, concealed the universal harmony for which he was searching. The spatial ambiguity caused by a juxtaposition of colours as in 'Oval composition' made it too difficult to intensify the pictorial structure, to tackle this problem required the negation of colour.

Mondrian's reasons for an emphasis of the horizontal or a vertical line was confirmed in a letter he wrote to H.P. Bremmer on 19th January 1914 from Paris.

It seems necessary to me to cut a horizontal or a vertical line continually, because of these directions are not opposed by others, they would be going to say something "definite", consequently something human, and this is exactly what I think that in art, one must not intend to give something human. By not wanting to tell or say something human. By not wanting absolute negation (ignoring) one's self, there arises the work of art that is a monument to beauty: above all things human, still the most human in its depths and universality: for me it is an ascertained fact that this is an art of the future. (55),

From the last sentence alone it can be inferred that there were good reasons for more or less negating colour for three years.

After staying at Domburg for sometime, Mondrian went to stay with his friend, Jacob Van Domselaar in Laren which is in the area north of Hilversum known as t'Gooi. After a while he rented a small apartment and a studio some distance from his home on the Noolsweg which leads to the town of Blaricum. After taking up residence in t'Gooi, Mondrian met S.B. Slijper who lived in Blaricum, the two men became life long friends. Slijper also became Mondrian's most important patron (56). In the area around Laren lived as Mondrian's letters reveal, a considerable number of artists. Schelfhout and his wife were resident there, as were the Van Domselaars, so was Jan Sluyters and numerous other artists. But it was not only artists who lived in the region, there were other such influential men as L.E.J. Brouwer, whose book 'Leven, Kunsten Mystiek', published in Delft in 1905 had had a considerable influence upon philosophic thought in Holland. It is probable that Brouwer's work exerted an influence of Dr. M.H.J. Schoenmaeker who was also a resident in the area of t'Gooi. Schoenmaeker's book 'Het nieuw wereldbeeld' was of great importance to Mondrian during the period in which he consciously organised his thoughts into written form. Another important figure living in the district was Bart van der Leek, as an artist he kept himself to himself, he had not been connected with any of the modern movements in Dutch art up to the time when Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg made his acquaintance. For a short time he co-operated with them in the founding of De Stijl in 1917. It was during 1915 that Mondrian first met Van Doesburg more than a year after Mondrian had taken up residence in t'Gooi. In fact



during October 1915 Mondrian moved from that area to Amsterdam taking up residence on the Ringdijk in Amsterdam, where he had lived as a student.

The precedents for the subjects with which Mondrian involved himself during the first part of his return to Holland in 1914 are directly traceable to the beginnings of his Luminist period in 1908, when he first began to visit Domburg. Mondrian executed during 1914 seven church facades in ovals which were abstracted from the subject of the Domburg Church. There are two other works in this series, but it is clear that they were derived from a Roman Catholic Church in Paris, Notre Dames des Champs. This factual point was made by Robert Welsh in his Mondrian catalogue<sup>(57)</sup>. As with all of Mondrian's architectural studies of this period, the perceived facade was intentionally recorded as a flat pattern.

There is a discrepancy of two and a half years between the catalogue dating given to the second of the facade studies of Notre Dames des Champs by Seuphor and Robert Welsh. Seuphor's dating is 1914, Welsh's is 1916-17. Seuphor's date is obviously based on the second drawing's similarity to the first. Whether Mondrian's letter to Bremmer in which he wrote about horizontals and verticals gives some strength to Seuphor's date I cannot say, for Robert Welsh has accepted the dating given to the work by Cor Blok whose contribution to the dating of Mondrian's work has been very substantial. As a compromise I would like to suggest that the exact date is not too important as long as it falls between 1914/17. For when the relationship of the iconography and the formal potential of this drawing is considered it can be seen that it acted as a significant part of the evolution of Mondrian's work during the three years 1914 to 1917.

In the first of the church facade series of drawings of 1914 'Church facade', made in ink there is a vertical emphasis, which quite obviously resulted from the nature of the Domburg church tower

and the position of the oval, its greatest dimension being in vertical axis. The problem of negating this dominant thrust appears to have been one with which Mondrian grappled throughout this series of works. Elements of architectural structure that appear in the first drawing such as the gothic windows, doorway and other forms containing curves he slowly transformed to completely integrate with his grid: see examples Church Facades 1914. There is in the series of Domburg Church Facades one drawing that was not contained within an oval placed in vertical axis. On that work Mondrian structured the entire rectangle and this study can be seen in relationship to composition 'No. 8' 1914, which has a similar all over quality of rectangular structuralism.

In addition to balancing the vertical and horizontal lines Mondrian was also confronted by the vertical emphasis of the oval format. Again he found a simple solution in, 'Church facades, Notre Dame des Champs' in which he started with a square format inscribed with a circle. The subject from which this work was abstracted was rather different from the architectural form of the church at Domburg, for as Robert Welsh points out, Notre Dame des Champs was built in a 'Mediterranean style', having a balanced centrality which must have enabled Mondrian to achieve the obvious pictorial balance, to be seen in his drawing. The second version achieves even greater symmetry. Mondrian discarded the circle and through the use of intersecting lines within a square, created a form which was balanced in the manner of a Greek Cross. To achieve a similar balance working from the gothic style church of Domburg must have been a considerable challenge and a consciously accepted one. It was resolved as the series concluded.

Parallel to the series of works, derived from architectural forms, Mondrian was working on a series begun in 1912, based on the sea. This series, which resulted in his famous 'Pier and ocean', works and 'Composition with lines', 1917. The whole of this series



consists of seventeen works, excluding but coupled with the sketches in the 'two sketch books'. Those sketches, like the trees are a large numerical and evolutionary part of Mondrian's work.

The first work in this series 'The sea', 1912, appears to be something of a peculiarity, in that, unlike Mondrian's other Cubist paintings of the same year, it has no vertical/horizontal grid structure, although it has a similar rhythmic quality to that achieved in 'Flowring apple tree', also of 1912. Its lack of structure, can, I suggest, be accounted for again in terms of the experimental process that Mondrian continually used, as outlined in relation to the evolution of the Church facade. The rhythm that Mondrian created can also be seen as being a truly perceptive abstract construct of that rhythm which is the seas.

In his book on Mondrian, Seuphor appears to have place Mondrian's studies of the sea in an intentional order, (see page 376 ), for his placing shows that Mondrian broke off this work for two years, in preference for his studies of facades. A part of the basis of Mondrian's work during this period was still rooted in real objects, having left Paris in 1914 and its particular architectural facades, he had to use either the facades of the Domburg church or another subject matter, therefore the sea itself. A subject that he had not really considered during his Luminist Domburg period of work. It should however be pointed out that the Domburg series of facade drawings did not result directly in a painting, but only in the large drawings.

In 1914 Mondrian executed six more works entitled 'The sea'. The first two accepting the order in which Seuphor has placed them, were quite obviously biased more towards the realistic illusionism than the structural abstraction. This does not diminish their evolutionary importance. They were done in pencil and their size 10 cms. by 15.5 cms. and 11 cms. by 16 cms. suggests that they were

originally part of the leaves of a sketch book, the published sketch book measures 11 cms. by 15.5 cms. These two sketches are signed, and this when compared with the other signed sketches in the sketch books, suggests that, in signing them, Mondrian felt them to be, complete as works in their own right.

Following Seuphor's order, the next four works in this series explored the implications of the painting 'The sea' of 1912 and the sketches, both the two illustrated by Seuphor just discussed, and those related to the same subject in the two sketch books. The first of the larger works was very closely based upon the painting of 1912, but in second work Mondrian employed two formal or conceptual devices that were not present in the first painting, namely a vertical series of lines which interacted with the horizontal lines, forming a grid structure. But in this instance the grid was only tentatively constructed. The curving rhythmic horizontal lines abstracted from the painting of 1912, remain the strongest element. The second form introduced was the truncated oval. The cause of this form has been rudimentarily considered earlier, it will be reconsidered a little later in relation to the whole series of the 'Sea and pier and ocean', works.

In the last three works entitled 'The sea', Mondrian continued, and the process is quite logical, to refine the balance between the horizontal perceptually constructed elements, and the vertical conceptually motivated elements, in such a manner that a pattern of rhythmic rectangles resulted. His method of intensifying the balance was to alter the proportions of the lines, of the linearly determined rectangles and by the adjustment of the tonality of the lines themselves. The last work in this series is in fact titled 'Ocean', it bears a very close relationship to the final work 'The sea', where it differs is in the greater scale that has been given to the determined



spaces and the proportionate thickening of the lines. These changes caused a necessary reduction or simplification of the number of composite parts.

The beginnings of Mondrian's synthesis of concept and perceptive abstraction which underpins 'The sea and pier and ocean', series is to be found in 'the two sketch books'. The three sketches referred to earlier 'Dunes and sea, dune and dunes and sea', which form the basis for the controversy over the dating of Mondrian's work during this period, are an important illustration in the process of Mondrian's artistic evolution, for they are good examples of his rejection of subject matter. As the progress of his sketches is traced through the 'two sketch books' towards the finished, 'Sea and pier and ocean' works, the dunes which formed such an important part in and during Mondrian's Luminist phase, were discarded.

A written note which illustrates Mondrian's involvement with teleological considerations during this period is to be found in the very beginning of 'the two sketch books'.

'There is a cause for everything, but we do not always know it. To know constitutes happiness.' (58)

A few pages later Mondrian wrote,

The conflict between matter and force exists in everything between the male and the female principle. This also in social life. The balance between the two means happiness. This is difficult to achieve because the one is abstract and the other real.' (59)

The interconnection between these theosophic statements, or as Seuphor says Spinoza like axioms<sup>(60)</sup> and Mondrian's search through drawing for universal truths was very important. The result of this testing process was the construction of a number of metaphysical conceptions. 'The sea' of 1912, the first of the series, is a work that is only concerned with perceptual illusion.

As the, 'sea', series progressed, it can be seen that Mondrian integrated the results of earlier 'intuitions', the concept of grid structure, with his 'intuition' of the sea. In many of his essays which evolved out of this period of intensive work, he stressed the

importance of intuition as an (elemental force) in the process of creative activity.

The metaphysical concept that he was also testing in this experimental context was that of the symbolism of the male and female elements. The male vertical symbolising spirit, the female horizontal symbolising matter, each tending or seeking the other. 'Because man in his primal essence is spirit, he has an urge towards matter.'

If the vertical lines were meant to be symbols of spirit, then it is possible that Mondrian understood their visible existence to be necessary for without them the horizontal lines symbolising matter would have no motive force. The reverse is also true whereby spirit can only be revealed perceptibly through matter. This considered in terms of the pantheistic doctrines of Theosophy and indeed of Spinoza,<sup>(61)</sup> can be understood as a plastic expression of their profoundest teachings. For Theosophy teaches that it is from the universal spirit that all matter emanates and therefore the universal spirit exists in all matter.

One of Mondrian's earliest sketches in 'the two sketch books', was of a horizontal pier. The observation point for this structure was quite obviously a position on the beach at 90° to the actual pier. The next sketch appears to have been an aerial view, or at least a synthetic perception of the manner in which the sea divided on impact with the structure of the pier. In this instance two forces and two types of matter were perceived as interacting. The first was the active force and matter of the oceans, the second the static force and matter of the rigid pier. The sketch which follows the study in the series, further developed the possible integration of the elements of the constructed conceptual structure, considered previously as being the oval and the horizontal, vertical grid.

The next steps made by Mondrian were of abstracting primary information from his continuing intuitions of the sea. In some of



these sketches it can be seen that Mondrian established a horizon line, which he then circumscribed with an oval. Which, with regard to the process in which he was involved, does seem to prove that he was deeply and continually involved in attempting to synthesise his conceptual framework with his perceptual responses. This attests that he was involved with one of the general tenets of Cubism. Mondrian had previously, but less consciously, carried out this sort of experiment in 1906 when he was involved with the reflection of trees and farm buildings in water.

It is at this point worth giving a little more consideration to the possible complex manner in which the use of the oval could have evolved. Once again there appear to have been multiple forces at work; past experience dating back to 1906 mentioned above, second formal and symbolic experimental conceptions, discussed earlier, and thirdly perception within a given setting, his perception of the sea. A diagram constructed to explain the third hypothesis, may clarify the point and demonstrate the manner that the synthesis could have been accomplished.

Upon a photograph of 'Sea after sunset', 1909 the linear elements shown in the first diagram can be constructed. The two points on that diagram, A and B are important as they demarcate not only the edge of the canvas but also the points at which the horizon curve meets the viewers. Mondrian's perceived curve of the beach. On the western coast of the Netherlands there are vast stretches of beach, often in the region of eighty to one hundred metres in width. Standing on the edge of such a beach at a point where the dunes begin to rise up from the beach, the view offered is of a vast uninterrupted vista in either direction. There is an observable point at which the horizon line of sea curves around to meet the farthest observable point of the beach, see the lower diagram. When this speculative diagram is compared comparatively with 'Sea after sunset', together with the diagrammatic abstraction from that work, it appears that an

expression of this view could be resolved with the circumscription of an oval form. This form would be tripartite, being made up of earth, water and sky; see the lower diagram.

Whether this proposition is a correct interpretation of the synthesis with which Mondrian was involved during this time, is impossible to verify. What can be said and substantiated was that his experiments with the oval form continued throughout the sketch book he used at Domburg, but was not used in the Paris facade stimulated sketches. The Domburg sketches culminated in the signed sketch 'Pier and ocean', a sketch that demonstrates Mondrian's method. It shows a complete synthesis of concept and percept. It was Mondrian's most positive sketch in that book and was the direct working study for the 'Pier and ocean', of 1914, the first of the larger 'Pier and ocean' series.

The method of refinement and (formal and metaphysical) intensification used by Mondrian in the completion of the 'Sea', series of works was again used in the 'Pier and ocean', series. As they progressed he employed a variety of media, charcoal, indian ink, coloured crayon, tempera and finally oil paint, on the final work of the series: 'Pier and ocean', 1915.

During 1916 Mondrian completed two paintings entitled 'Composition', the third painting of this series, he completed during 1917. They form the third group of works derived, during this period, directly from the sea. Their titles are evidence of Mondrian's understanding of the abstract quality that had evolved in them. These three paintings coupled with 'Composition with colour planes', 1914 are highly important. For ease of progress, I shall split them into two groups, taking 'Composition' 1916, and grouping it with 'Composition with colour planes', 1914, leaving 'Composition', 1916 plus and minus and 'Composition with lines' 1917 together, for these latter two are both linear works, whilst the former are both compositions with line and colour planes.



'Composition with colour planes', 1914 was derived from the Parisian facade series. Although 'Composition', 1916 has the slightest suggestion of an Oval in vertical axis. It is almost as if Mondrian rotated and elongated 'Pier and ocean', 1915 through 90° for the purpose of intensifying the process of abstraction. Having made this rotation, he then appears to have experimented with a palette of colours used at the end of his first stay in Paris. In both of these paintings and especially in the painting 'Composition', 1916 Mondrian changed the usual position of his grid structure by placing it over the top of the colour planes, thus emphasising its determinate nature. The significance of this will be discussed a little later.

What I called the second group is made up of 'Composition', 1916, with a subtitle 'Plus and minus' and 'Composition with lines', 1917. The first of these paintings is an unfinished canvas and might well have been concluded in the manner of 'Composition', 1916 i.e. with colour planes. The state in which it remains is, however, intriguing since the balance achieved between the painted structure and the unfinished surface is so refined, that it appears as an important forerunner of the so called classic paintings of the 1930's.

'Composition with lines', 1917 stands as the last of Mondrian's paintings that can be directly traced to a derivative source, the 'Sea pier and ocean', series. It was painted with what Mondrian was to describe as, the neutral colours, black, white and resulting grey. The linear elements in this work were though, all executed in the same tonal strength, variety rhythm and dynamism being achieved through a variety of length, proportion and placement. This procedure of variation was to play a fundamental role in the Neo plastic paintings.

The works that have just been considered can truly be termed post Cubist, for as has been shown they formed a logical extension of the implications of the formal symbolic aspects of 'Still life

with ginger pot, No. 1 & 2'.

(8) In January and February of 1915 Mondrian exhibited at the Rotterdamsche Kunst Kring with Le Fauconnier and Petrus Alma. Once again the exhibition was reviewed by Plasschaert, who was no less vitriolic than he had been of Mondrian's exhibition at Walrecht in the Hague during the previous year. But during this year Mondrian met Theo van Doesburg who had published an article in 'Eenheid', Amsterdam, in which he praised Mondrian's work. The article was called 'Moderne Kunst'. Between their first meeting in 1915 and 1917 Mondrian and Van Doesburg held numerous discussions concerning the nature of art. It is known from Mondrian's letters to Bremmer and Mrs. Van Domselaar's accounts, that Mondrian had been working on notes for a book since 1914, Van Doesburg persuaded Mondrian to write up the notes into completed essays. These essays then began to appear in the De Stijl magazine which was founded in 1917 with Van Doesburg as its editor.

During the year 1915 the split with Conrad Kickert widened, the correspondence between Loedwijk Schelfhout and Mondrian reveals the nature of this developing alienation.

Laren Tuesday, 28th July 1915.

'Dear Loe and Tine,

..... I've been 'approached', side long to come into the M.K.K. again. Don't tell. I've things to tell but they are not important ...

Bye, Piet.'

From this correspondence it can also be gathered that Le Fauconnier, who stayed in the Netherlands for the duration of the First World War, was deeply involved with the Modern Art Circle. Schelfhout and Mondrian both hoped that he would side with them rather than with Kickert, from the letter of 28th July.

'About Le Fauconnier, I have only to tell that he immediately took a tramcar to Kickert to warn him after you had informed him, coming



from the museum, of your plans ... if he does not join us, all right, it would be a pity though.'

The plan referred to was Schelfhout's proposed exhibition, which was to take place at the Stedelijk Museum during October 1915. The artists who were to take part, were those who were dissatisfied with Kickert, being Schelfhout, Mondrian, Jan Sluyters, Leo Gestel, Le Fauconnier and J.C. van Epen, who was in fact, an architect. The exhibition was opened by H.P. Bremmer, was important in terms of personal support and promotion of Modern Art in the Netherlands during this period. There were of course other significant critics at the time, but none of them appear to have held the seminal position that can be accredited to Bremmer. During the period he was also acting as adviser to Mrs Kroller assisting her build up the basis of the now world famous Rijksmuseum Kroller Muller collection bequeathed by her to the State. The Museum itself was founded at Olterloo in 1937. From the exhibition at the Stedelijk Bremmer purchased, for Mrs Kroller's developing collection, Mondrian's painting 'Composition X' (62)

Mondrian's financial position during the years of the First World War was one of very considerable poverty. He subsisted as his correspondence with H.P. Bremmer reveals, by making copies, from a letter dated 4th October 1915, Ringdijk, Amsterdam.

Though I have been obliged to make many copies in this year of the war (I did not want to make use of the relief committee) I know I have made progress. The opportunity for more expression is bound to come. I am working on a larger copy in the Rijksmuseum, happily I've almost finished. (63)

During March of the next year, help came to Mondrian from an unexpected quarter, (64) the critic Steenhoff, who did not approve of Mondrian's modernist tendencies, as has been said, was not one of approval wrote to H.P. Bremmer to ask him to use his connections with Mrs Kroller Muller to gain for Mondrian some financial assistance. What Steenhoff wrote is very interesting. 17th March 1916, Amsterdam.

. . . I know you rather appreciate his work, perhaps more than I who respect his expression of art more specially for it's moral quality and such as the work, so is the person. As an artist he is maybe the most innocent soul of all the younger ones - or rather he surely is. Maybe it should be said of him the same as of Thijs Maris, that in following out his principles he tends to the maniacal.

Anyhow, he shows a fanatical doggedness true and pure but his material existence suffers the disadvantages, the more so as with his delicate and modest nature he is extremely unfit to gain profits for himself. He is a decent man in the best sense of the word in our society, and he would rather hunger than make bills that he can't pay, like so many artists - because they are artists! I think he is rather in trouble now, that's why the thought came to me of this letter. He makes small demands for his subtenance, I am sure that with F50 per month he would be very happy (in the seventh heaven) I declare solemnly that M does not know anything about my endeavour ... and if some support is granted, I should prefer his not knowing of this letter ...

W. Steenhoff, Busken Huetstraat 4.

Bremmer acted rapidly since on the 29th March Mondrian replied to Bremmer's offer of help.

Laren N.H. 29th March 1916.

Dear Mr. Bremmer,

As I was in Amsterdam yesterday, I can reply to you only now. I am very obliged for your letter and offer. As you supposed by the nature of my work I have troubles with the material side of my life, more than one. Your proposal will permit me to keep on working. I accept with all my heart.' ...

Bremmer's proposal was to purchase yearly four paintings from Mondrian in return for the sum of £50 per month, proposed by Steenhoff<sup>(66)</sup>. Joosten in his documentation, records that this subsidy continued for four years<sup>(67)</sup> from April 1916. During the third year Bremmer increased the amount.

Mrs Bremmer recorded in her manuscript 'Letters from Artists', that the reason why Bremmer's terminated of his financial help in the fourth year was because he discovered a 'stiffening' in Mondrian's work which he was unable to appreciate. He was thus unable to recommend them. Mondrian in fact had great difficulty in meeting the terms of the agreement, as was again recorded by Joosten records, Bremmer only received four works during the four year period instead of the agreed sixteen.

In an undated letter, but one that must have been written in 1916, Mondrian spoke to Bremmer about his writings. It was an



important statement since it contests, by implication, one part of the criticisms levelled at him by Plasschaert. It also gives an indication of the content that was to be contained in Mondrian's subsequent essays.

'I have been working for one year and a half at a writing in which I want to say what I think of art'. This is that it shows that either before leaving Paris or immediately on arriving in Holland, Mondrian began to write about art, a fact referred to earlier in connection with the memories of Mrs Van Domselaar. The continuation is continued writings could have been stimulated by his unpublished article for the Theosophical Society's magazine.

The record of Mrs Van Domselaar's Middlekoop's memoirs of Mondrian are to be found with Mondrian's correspondence with Bremmer and Schelfhout in Joosten's documentation. Her memoirs were first published in 'Maatstaf 1959'. In that article, she described Mondrian in the period of the First World War, as 'speakingly hesitantly; gropingly, one would say'. Immediately after his return to the Netherlands, Mondrian stayed with the Van Domselaar's in Laren. During that period, as Mrs Van Domselaar records, he read to his hosts the notes that he was at the time making in order so as to get their reactions.

In 1915, when the reviews of his joint exhibition with Le Fauconnier and Petrus Alma at the Rotterdamsche Kunst Kring by De Meester-Obreen appeared in the magazine Elseviers Maandschrift, Mondrian was incensed enough to write a reply<sup>(68)</sup>. It should be remembered that he had written a reply to Querido in 1909. In his Documentation 2 Joosten's reports Mondrian as saying.

Sentiment is more external than the mind. The mind builds, constructs, sentiment expresses mood etc. etc. By the simplest line the mind constructs the most pure and only uses the most primitive colour. The most primitive colour is the inmost, the purest, I don't give up colour, but I want it to be as intense as possible. I don't neglect the line, but I want it in its strongest expression. The supple line is the nature appearance of things is a slackening of the form. You say that those that don't understand me, it gives

the impression that I don't give the impression that I don't give the divine because of the emotion of beauty, the visible, but give what I abstracted myself out of it. I agree, that is seemingly so, but it is not so. When you shape the exterior of things (in their ordinary appearance) then there is the occasion that the human, the individual side will reveal itself. When you shape the inward n.l. by the abstract form of the exterior, you are nearer to revealing the spiritual, thus the divine, the universal.

This the universal, seems to as individual people cold and less sensitive than the particular that we have in our human existence (being). The same goes for what you say about seeing a flower. You are amazed that I want to dissect that splendour and transmute it into vertical and horizontal lines. I grant you that you are right being amazed: but I have no intention to shape that tender splendour. What touches us is beauty in the flower and is not caused by the innermost depth of her being, her form and colour, is beautiful, but not the deepest beauty. I also think the flower beautiful in her outward appearance, but a deeper beauty is at the bottom. I did not know how to shape this, when I painted that fading chrysanthemum flower with the long stem (S199/136), I shaped it through feeling and that feeling was human, maybe universally human already. Later I found too much feeling in this work and I changed a blue flower (S200/156). This one remained staring fixedly and spoke more of the inflexible. But the colours though pure already, were too much an expression of individual feeling for me. I then had a time of sober colours, grey and yellow and I was trying to make my line more firm. Gradually, I came to using almost exclusively vertical and horizontal lines.

Mondrian continued his defence in a letter to Bremmer, ...

and I try to show that my work is only a consequence of what has always been done and has been tried to do: that all art was right and mine has come forth - out of necessity - from the spirit of the age. To treat a thing unsuperficially - even if it is something one has done oneself - takes tremendous pains, you know that yourself. That is why it took so long and still it is not finished, I am talking about man too: for art and man are one.

The reply and the comments to Bremmer were written in more or less the style that Mondrian was to use in the essays that were published in De Stijl.

In 1916, Mondrian made the acquaintance of Bart van der Leek whom he introduced to Theo van Doesburg. He wrote to Bremmer about his contact with Van der Leek in a letter dated Laren 1st August 1916, 'I don't know if I told you already that it did my heart good to find in Van der Leek a man striving in the same direction.' (69)



Footnotes - Chapter 6.

1. Mondrian supported Kickert in the founding of the Moderne Kunst Kring in Amsterdam. See Mondrian, Toronto, Philadelphia and The Hague 1966, chronology.
2. Mondrian documents. Compiled by Joop Joosten, Museum Journal. 26 letters from P. Mondrian to Loedwijk Schelfhout and H.P. Bremmer (1910-1918), part one ten letters 1910-1914. Tr into English by Mervrouw Drost-Felix April 1976.
3. B. Loojses-Terpatra Moderne Kunst in Nederlande: 1900-1914 Pb Haentjens Dekker en Gumbert : Utrecht 1968.
4. Schopenhauer's theory of correspondence considered in the preceeding chapter.
5. Plato. Timaeus and Critias. Tr by Desmond Lee. Pb by Penguin Classics 1965, rp 1971.
6. M. Seuphor, as recorded by Albert van de Briel, p. 53.  
Mondrian was most enthusiastic about Schure's book, it appears that Mondrian could have had access to this book a year after it's publication in 1899, this is the implication given by Van de Briel. In it Schure stated that Plato as well as Pythagoras went to Egypt for a period of study and both were initiated into the arcane knowledge by the priests of the Egyptian religion. The Great Initiates, vol 2 Pythagoras and Plato, pb. William Rider London.
7. Baruch Spinoza. Ethics. Tr Andrew Boyle Intro T.S. Gregory. Pb Everymans Library 1910. Revised 1959. J.M. Dent London
8. Ibid. 'Concerning God: definitions 111' pl.
9. Ibid Second part 'concerning the nature and origin of mind', p.37.
10. Piet Mondrian: Two Sketch books: 1912-1914. Ed by Robert Welsh, Harry Holtzman and Joop Joosten. Meulenhoff International. N.V. Amsterdam. 1969. Pp 31-32.
11. Ibid p.39.

12. Ibid p.40.
13. Ibid p.59.
14. Ibid p.52-53.
15. Ibid p.36.
16. Winterhur. Dr. Oskar Reinhart collection.
17. Rijksmuseum Kroller-Muller. Otterloo Nederland.
18. Joop Joosten: Between Cubism an Abstraction. Piet Mondrian. Centennial Exhibition Catalogue. Solomon Guggenheim Museum New York 1971.
19. Piet Mondrian: Towards the true vision of reality. Mondrian catalogue Valentine Dudensing Gallery New York Jan 1942.
20. Charles Biederman. Art as the evolution of visual knowledge. Red Wing Minnesota 1948
21. John Golding. Cubism: A history and analysis 1907-14. Faberund Faber Ltd 1954/1968.
22. Ibid. p.23 and 27. Published originally in Pan, Paris Oct/Nov 1910.
23. Ibid pp.23-28.
24. Ibid p.28.
25. Ibid p.33.
26. Ibid p.33
27. Op cit see n7, both in style and in content.
28. Madame Blavatsky. Isis Unveiled and the Secret Doctrine, vol 1 and 2. The Secret Doctrin was pb in the Netherlands during 1907/08 under the title 'De Geheime Leer'.
29. The sketches are dated 1909, these dates were applied by Mondrian in New York, and Robert Welsh has gone to considerable lengths to demonstrate that Mondrian miscalculated the year that he first went to Paris by one year, thereby misdating a number of his works. See 'Two sketch books', introduction p.6. I am not entirely convinced by Prof Welsh's argument as to the dating of these sketches, for if they were working studies for the



dunescape paintings, especially 'Dune V', Dune VI' and 'Dunelandscape', then they would have been executed during Mondrian's visits to Domburg prior to his execution of those paintings which he dated 1909/1910, 1910/1911, or are the dates on those works incorrect? It is hardly likely that they were executed as sketches after the paintings, as they would appear to be inconsistent with Mondrian's working methods. I therefore suggest, that although Prof Welsh is correct in his proof of Mondrian's true arrival in Paris, his dating of the sketches could possibly be incorrect.

30. Daniel Robbins. From Symbolism to Cubism. The Abbaye of Cr teil. Art Journal XX111 2.pp 111-116.
31. Op cit see n30
32. Henry Kahnweiler. Der weg zan Kubismus pb 1920. Tr Henry Aronson, The rise of Cubism. Wittenborn Schultz 1949. See also Theories of Modern Art. Herschel B. Chipp. Cal 168, pp 248-259.
33. Op cit see n32 p.255.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid p.258.
36. Op cit see n14.
37. Op cit see n10, p39.
38. G. Apollinaire. Apollinaire on Art, Essays and Reviews, 1902-18. Documents of Modern Art. Thames and Hudson 1972. Ed Lerog C. Breanig, tr Susan Suleiman. 1972. P289. Also in M. Seuphor Piet Mondrian: pp 98-99.
39. Loedwijk Schelfhout. Landweg in de Provence 1912. Collection Haags Gemmeent Museum.

40. Otto en Adya van Rees. Leven en werk tot 1934. Pb by Haags Gemeente Museum, 1975.
41. Op cit see n19.
42. One of the most important studies in this series of drawings 'Bos', is dated 1912, whilst in M. Seuphor's catalogue it is dated 1911, this discrepancy leads to the suspicion that Mondrian could have dated them later and by so doing muddled the date.
43. Op cit see n10, p.22.
44. Op cit see n28, vol 2 p.392.
45. Op cit see n19 p.2.
46. In the Mondrian Archive, compiled and owned by Harry Holtzman some of the Theosophic Documents that Mondrian owned and read during this period can be seen. Two items that remain are a series of lectures given in the Netherlands during the spring of 1908, by Dr. Rudolph Steiner, and Aan de voeten de Maester written by Krishnamurti, pb Theosophic Society Amsterdam 1913.
47. Op cit see n.28, vol 2, p.214.
48. Op cit see n.10 p.35.
49. Sixten Ringbom. The Sounding Cosmos. Abo Akademi, 1970.
50. Rudolf Steiner. Colour. Tr John Salter, pb Rudolf Steiner Press 1935. Rp 1968.
51. Ibid p.12 'Colour Experience, Image Colours'.
52. Op cit see n.10, p.52.
53. Op cit see n.6, p.134.
54. Op cit see n2 part 1.
55. Ibid.



56. It was due to S.B. Slijper's interest and patronage of Mondrian's work coupled with his generosity and public benefaction that the Haags Gemeente Museum has such a fine collection of Mondrian's work.
57. Piet Mondrian : catalogue, Toronto, Philadelphia and The Hague 1966. see pp 152, 153 and 154.
58. Op cit see n8, p.16.
59. Ibid, p.22.
60. Op cit. see n6, p.120.
61. Op cit see n.8, p.65.
62. Op cit, see n.2, p.17.
63. Op cit, see n2, Amsterdam Rigndijk 55, 4th October 1915.
64. Ibid, p.17
65. Ibid,p.26.
66. Op cit see n.9. p.130.
67. Op cit see n2, p.21.
68. Ibid. p.14.
69. Ibid, p.21, Laren 1 August 1916.

Chapter 7. The critical years: Mondrian's transition from Post Cubist  
Abstraction into Neo Plastic painting.

- Subchapters:
- (1) The break with Cubist Abstraction.
  - (2) Post Cubist Abstraction paintings and Bart van der Leek.
  - (3) Mondrian's return to Paris: Neo plasticism is born.
  - (4) Mondrian and the development of framing.
  - (5) Mondrian and Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers' definition  
of the plastic against empty formalism.
  - (6) Neo plasticism developed.
  - (7) Footnotes



## Chapter 7

- (1) The phrase Post Cubist Abstraction has been coined for the paintings that evolved during the period of Mondrian's enforced stay in the Netherlands during the First World War. This body of work was firmly rooted in his Cubist paintings and they should be understood as being a logical extension of that body of work. This development was motivated by Mondrian's metaphysical inclinations. For whilst Picasso and Braque continued to develop paintings that included even more elements taken directly from sensible reality, than their analytical Cubist paintings had employed; Mondrian moved along an almost opposite path, one that more and more withdrew from the influences of sensible reality as the object of painting. Clear descriptive form can be given to the differences that arose, it revolves around the interpretation of the term Universal. Cézanne in his painting and in his theoretical posits had directed the artists attention towards an objective cognizance of the forms that could be employed to give expression to the knowledge of immutable reality. In his painting he had always been concerned to give expression to the immutability of nature through a visual synthesis of sensible reality with a conceptual cognizance of reality. His attitude had offered to the evolution of painting a more objective concept of reality in opposition to the sensual and subjectivist attitudes propagated by the Symbolist and latter Fauves and Expressionist painters.

The zenith to which Analytic Cubism arose was the logical development of the intellectual propositions imbedded in Cézanne's paintings. The everyday objects of the artist's environment, cups, bottles and tables were used as purely formal but sensibly known vehicles for a conceptual visualization of that reality. Mondrian's experimentation with the same set of concepts has already been considered. What shifted Mondrian's attitude from the empirical<sup>(1)</sup>, concept of the universal taken by Picasso and the artists of the Section D'Or was his own urge towards Universal awareness. His studies in Theosophy in the years before 1909 coupled with the influence of forces that were developing in his own work had if only tentatively directed his attention to an awareness



of the distinction between universal but empirical conceptions of painting and the possibility of a truly Universal form of painting. The catalyst that made it possible for Mondrian to become aware of this distinction was the influence of Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers and the stream of philosophic thought that was at the root of Schoenmaekers' work. The majority of this philosophic influence being of a metaphysical nature and traceable back through western thought and art to Plato's theories of Ideas<sup>(2)</sup> and beyond.

It can therefore be stated that the direction followed by a considerable body of the Avant Garde art that was evolving out of Cubism was concerned with an empirical concept of the expression of universal reality. This is one way in which the division that arose between Mondrian and Van Doesburg on the one side and Bart van der Leek on the other can be described. The theories and paintings with which Mondrian concerned himself during this period of Post Cubist Abstraction were involved in attempting to resolve this problem, to make a clear distinction and by so doing to evolve a form of painting that gave clear expression to Universal principles. The logical requirements of this search necessitated the adoption of an a priori pure determinate system of plastic thought. To this end Dr Schoenmaekers' concept of 'plastic mathematics', was important in helping Mondrian to arrive at his working system.

- (2) The paintings of Mondrian's Post Cubist period of abstract painting, 1915-1917 had two direct sources in sensible reality, the sea; as in the 'Pier and ocean', series and the facades of buildings; 'Church at Domburg'. In both of these series of works Mondrian had employed the symbol of the cross. His decision to use this symbol was not though a singular decision but a plural one which involved at least three sources of influence, the Cubist objective grid structure used not only by Mondrian, but as shown previously by Picasso. Secondly Mondrian's decision was influenced by the teaching of Theosophy which in many instances makes direct reference to the cross as the symbol of the Cosmos, the validity of this symbol was also substantiated in Dr Schoenmaekers' books. The third source of influence being Mondrian's perception of such objects as the sea and churches: and his apprehension of those objects in the context of the other influences.



Post Cubist Abstract paintings such as 'Plus and minus, study for composition 1916', or 'Composition' 1916, demonstrates the close but evolving connection that Mondrian's work had during this critical period to his late Cubist paintings of 1913-14. But in both of these paintings the structure and the proportions of the lines which form the crosses were made more determinate: any secondary curving linear elements were in these paintings discarded. The first of these works was a monochrome study, on the second Mondrian returned to his late cubist palette of pinks, blues and ochres with a resulting neutral gray. The area's proportions and positions of these colours Mondrian determined according to the near grid formed by the multiplicity of crosses. If reference is made to the first works the process of this determination can be seen; for on that work the original pencil lines can be seen creating a structural underpinning upon which Mondrian constructed heavier lines and crosses in oil.

The neutral gray that Mondrian used on the second of these works he applied in a seemingly arbitrary manner when compared with the determinate placement of the other coloured rectangles. These two works must have provided Mondrian with a number of clearly identifiable formal problems with which to involve himself, the resolution of which would partly solve the dichotomy between the two interpretations of the term universal in the context of painting and art. Accordingly and in keeping with the rationality that Mondrian was evolving, he took from the 'Compositions', of 1915-16 formal elements with which to work on separate paintings. The first of these experiments resulted in his magnificent painting 'Composition in black and white', 1916-17. In this work Mondrian discarded both colour and the planes that he had used in 'Composition', 1916, by so doing he was able to concentrate his attention upon the nature of lines and subsequent crosses, which he composed into a truncated oval form. This form he had previously evolved through his landscape paintings and had then intensified during his Cubist period and in the studies that led him towards his Post Cubist abstract series of paintings, the same form can also be perceived in 'Composition', 1916.

It was to 'Composition in black and white', that Bart van der Leek referred when he claimed that Mondrian had come directly under his influence<sup>(3)</sup>. It was a reasonable assumption and might have been correct

but for the quality of plural conceptual development that was taking place in Mondrian's artistic evolution. Van der Leek was during the period 1916 to 1918 concerned with a process of abstraction that had similarities to the painted results achieved by Mondrian during the same period. Both men worked from the specific, in the case of Van der Leek for example workers leaving a factory and a composition derived from donkey riders. Mondrian's specific visual source was the sea and the facades of buildings. Van der Leek's intentions were concerned with the refreshment of art and thus a real role for the artist in relation to society, but one in a demarcated area from that of the architect. Mondrian had by 1917/18 not clearly formulated his theories as they were to be far more complex than those formulated by Van der Leek, who did not, for example conceive of painting as being concerned with cosmological concepts; but only with empirical generalities. The influence of Van der Leek upon Mondrian revolves around the resolution of formal painting problems, such a pure work as 'Composition', 1918 with its beautifully ordered forms and proportions could well have had a direct formal influence upon Mondrian's paintings of this period. But it was significant that during this period of formal change that Mondrian was also formulating his Universalist philosophy of art, this was to be the antithesis of Van der Leek's 'universal', but definably empirical form of art. If Van der Leek's 'Composition', of 1918 is compared with his painting 'Horseman', of the same year it can be concluded that the elements that he used in 'Composition', were a generalization from some specific sensible form. A descriptive analogy that can be employed to illustrate the difference between the development of these two artists is that of inductive in the case of Van der Leek's painting and deductive in the case of Mondrian. These two terms are used guardedly so as to give emphasis to the nature of the difference that was taking place in the two men's work.

During 1917 Mondrian continued to explore the formal implications of 'Composition', 1916. The order in which he conducted these experiments is not absolutely clear, but most catalogues that refer to the chronological order of his work place the following two paintings after 'Composition in black and white', and before the series called 'Compositions with coloured planes'. The decision as to their chronology is supported



by the obvious nature of the development within the terms of the overall experiment that Mondrian was conducting during this period. The two paintings that occurred at this point were 'Composition in colour A and B', 1917. Mondrian in these two paintings reintroduced colour planes in two scales of proportionate value. The smaller group, which appear as dashes, have their direct precedent in those that he employed in the preceding work, 'Composition in black and white'. Whilst the large group were a more determinate form than those used in the execution of 'Composition', 1916. As with the painting of 1916 the position of the larger rectangular planes does not appear to have been entirely determined by the grid that can be formed from the extension of the smaller elements to the edges of the canvases. The underlying structure for both of these paintings and for 'Composition in black and white', was based on a similar form of ordering the essential structure of the paintings to that which was employed by Mondrian during his Cubist experiments. In the case of each of these paintings of 1917 there are other elements that relate them directly to Mondrian's Cubist phase; for they all were composed within a truncated oval shape, for at this time Mondrian had been unable to solve, as he was to in his Neo plastic paintings, the harmonization or more exactly the complete integration of the figures and the field in his compositions. Colour planes and black linear elements still existed as elements composed and floating upon a surface. Although the use of the cubist based grid, which is so clearly perceptible in 'Plus and minus: study for composition 16', and the finished work itself had gone a considerable way to solving this problem it still existed, in that the structure and the planes thereby determined, although connected to the edges of the canvases still floated in illusory ambiguous space.

During this same year 1917 Mondrian extended his Post Cubist experiment further he painted five works in which he discarded the linear grid indications created by the small rectangular elements in the two previous paintings 'Composition in colour A and B'. These five paintings he designated with the title 'Composition with colour planes'. It was at this stage of his evolution that Mondrian's compositional constructs bore their closest resemblance to those used by Bart van der Leek's paintings of the same year. It should also be noted that at this same moment that

Theo van Doesburg's bore a close resemblance to both Mondrian's and Van der Leck's paintings. In many respects the majority of his work at this stage was closer to that of Van der Leck, in that the process of abstraction with which Van Doesburg was concerned started from singular objects of perception moving through the process of abstraction, as for example, his famous composition based on a cow. Mondrian's Cubist based process of abstraction incorporated the conceptual grid of apprehension previously discussed. It appears that neither Van der Leck nor Van Doesburg employed this synthetic system. In 1917 Van der Leck titled one of his paintings 'Geometrical composition'<sup>(4)</sup>. This painting though came about through exactly the same process of abstraction as 'Mine triptych', of the previous year. If a comparison is made between Mondrian's paintings of the same year, especially 'Composition with colour planes', it can be seen that Mondrian's paintings maintain a structural order that was related to the determinancy evolved in his acceptance of the Cubist grid and its subsequent development. The inbalance of asymmetrical rhythm within symmetrical forms is very apparent. For in this series of paintings Mondrian was still unable to resolve the problem of the integration of the planes with the ground in homogeneous balance. Van der Leck with his experience of a training in mural art was able to offer a solution. His development of form from sensible images had like Mondrian's excluded the oblique as a major structural element, thereby his rectangular forms were set parallel to the picture plane. In all of his works of this period Van der Leck placed the body of his compositions symmetrically upon the picture plane. He was thus able to achieve a balanced and ordered overall effect, consider for example 'Geometrical composition', 1917, with its subtitle 'workers leaving a factory'. Compare this with Mondrian's work of the same year 'Composition with colour planes'. The obvious similarities that exist are in the rectangular shape and the colours used by both artists, where they differ and this is not so obvious, is in their original premises. In the instance of Van der Leck his painting began with his perception of workers leaving a factory, in the instance of Mondrian his work had evolved to a point where the premise was primarily and purely conceptual, which embraced geometric form not as the abstracted symbolism of sensible



reality but as the metaphor of metaphysical reality that Mondrian was at the same time struggling to clearly apprehend and to give substance to in his paintings and written notes.

Other differences that existed between Van der Leek's paintings of this year and those of Mondrian can be seen in the way that Mondrian was already creating asymmetrical compositions in the placement of the rectangles that he employed in the composition of his paintings. This was the case in the instance of all five of the series of 'Composition with colour planes', paintings of 1917. In addition to the overall asymmetry Mondrian also placed a number of the compositional rectangular elements against the edges of the canvas: see 'Composition with colour planes'; 1917 in which it appears that three of the coloured squares extend beyond the edges of the canvas, a device, as shown earlier that Mondrian was to employ in giving to the picture plane a real concrete quality, thereby determinately establishing all the parts of the painting in space. But as can be seen in 'Composition with colour planes', 1917 the planes that do not directly connect with the edges of the canvas are still somewhat ambiguous in their spatial position. This ambiguity was the next problem that Mondrian had to resolve, by so doing the elements that make up the pictorial imbalance of figure and field would be dissolved into one unified whole of a very different order to that achieved by Van der Leek.

During this period Van Doesburg's painting had really swung behind the premises that were evolving as the basis of Mondrian's painting. Premises that were deeply influenced in a catalytic manner by the work of Dr M. H. J. Scheonmaekers and his proposals concerning 'plastic mathematics'. Published in 'Het nieuwe wereldbeeld', and 'Beginnelsen der beeldende wiskunde'; (the new image of the world and the principles of mathematics).

- (3) In the year of 1918 Mondrian returned to Paris after the conclusion of the First World War, his work during the period of his enforced sojourn in the Netherlands had almost completed the transition from Cubism through Post Cubist Abstraction to Neo plastic painting. Van der Leek commented retrospectively on Mondrian's intentions for painting with this move; his comment described the final phase of Mondrian's transition into Neo plastic painting; although they were intended to be derogatory.

In 1913 Mondrian went to Paris saying simply 'I'm going away and I'm going to join everything together again, because people are saying that I am under your (Van der Leck's) influence and I don't want that.'<sup>(5)</sup>

There can be no doubt that Mondrian did not wish to be seen to be under Van der Leck's influence for as has been shown and described by the terms empirical and universal Mondrian's intentions at a fundamental conceptual level, were opposed to those of Van der Leck. The first painting in which Mondrian took the next logical step, having experimented with the combination of linear elements and planar elements in 'Composition 1916', was 'Composition: colour planes with grey contours', 1918<sup>(6)</sup>.

In this painting Mondrian realised the potential of the completed grid as an observable pictorial device. The cross structural device that he used upon 'Composition in black and white', was transformed into the determinates of the planar positions. In this way Mondrian was able to negate the absolute symbolism that Dr Schoenmaekers attached to the cross. Ancient wisdom represented the fundamental inward-outward relationship by the cross. Neither this symbol; however nor any other symbol, can be the plastic means for Abstract - Real painting: the symbol constitutes a new limitation, on the one hand, and it is too absolute on the other. <sup>(7)</sup>

Mondrian's development of a linear structure solved for him the problem of what Van der Leck termed the 'spatial whole'<sup>(8)</sup>. A comparison of Mondrian's two paintings 'Composition with colour planes', and 'Composition: colour planes with grey contours', demonstrates that in the one painting unity had not been achieved whilst in the latter work it had, and this in the space of about a year, the resulting painting was therefore both physically and visually two dimensional.

That is why the new art cannot be manifested as (naturalistic) concrete representation, which even where universal vision is present - always points more or less to the particular, or in any case conceals the universal within it. The new plastic cannot be cloaked by what is characteristic of the particular, natural form and colour, but must be expressed by the abstraction of form and colour - by means of the straight line and the determinate primary colour. <sup>(9)</sup>

'Modern art follows ancient art in accentuating the planarity of natural - reality; it is only a more consistent expression of the same idea: the plastic conception.'<sup>(10)</sup>

'Composition: colour planes with grey contours', 1918 was therefore the first painting in which Mondrian achieved the consistency of expression,



for which he sought. It would appear therefore that Mondrian had, in a general sense, achieved with this painting the entire compositional potentialities of all his subsequent Neo plastic paintings. An achievement based upon the rational analysis and synthesis of the potential embedded in earlier paintings, for 'Composition: with colour planes and grey contours', was indeed a truly synthetic painting in all its varying aspects. But there was a further aspect to this development that needs to be considered; its existence can be identified by reference to what I have termed 'An untitled and unknown drawing: circa 1918'. This drawing is a part of the collection of Mondrian's works in the Gemeente Museum, The Hague. Its existence is of course known by the Museum staff but what is not known and this is what I shall now explain is its probable importance to the whole of Mondrian's subsequent development of his Neo plastic style.

There were it would appear three modes by which Mondrian determined the functional significance and role of any of his drawings (teckeningen). The decisions that he made with regard to these issues were, I consider, based upon his conscious recognition of the multilevelled existence of various sketches and drawings. The first mode that he recognised was that of a drawing/sketch that had an indirect relationship to his later paintings, for example the first sketches of the sea's impact upon the pier. The second mode were drawings that he recognised as having had a direct reference to particular paintings, but had no direct aesthetic value, as had the drawing in question as will be shown. The third mode Mondrian recognised were drawings which had a multilevelled existence being both aesthetic and prescriptive. The drawings that he identified in this multilevelled mode can again be split into subgroups; necessarily so owing to the nature of Mondrian's work, which up until 1922 included a number of very fine (teckeningen) of flowers, as well as drawings concerned with his major creative preoccupation, the evolution of a Universal Art.

The flower studies, that between 1916 and 1922 became a subgroup, played during his landscape and Luminist periods a direct and vital role in the resolution of content in Mondrian's evolutionary experiments with 'symbolism'. In retrospect the function of these drawings was more that of refutation through visual experiment than of verification. This

description of process in relation to Mondrian's evolution gives clarity to a process that can be traced throughout the entirety of his life's work, from the 1890's to his final unfinished painting 'Victory Boogie Woogie', of 1944. The drawings of flowers and such related subjects executed between 1916 and 1922 were executed for commercial reasons, and although they are very fine studies in themselves, they must, as has been indicated, be categorised in a subgroup, for they did not form a part of Mondrian's evolutionary process. Two subgroups have been established therefore, drawings from nature, circa 1910, that had a direct relationship to Mondrian's dialectical evolution, secondly those that he executed for monetary reasons.

For reasons of clarity it is necessary to pursue this method a little further and to clearly identify which works can be said to exist in the third group of these modes of drawing. The last group contained drawings, it appears, that Mondrian recognised as having or having had a direct relationship to paintings, but also existed as aesthetic wholes in themselves, studies such as 'Pier and ocean', in the 'Two sketchbooks'.

It is obvious that the processes of drawing in a general sense formed for Mondrian an essential part of his creative evolution. The tripartite modality that I have outlined above is I think analogous to the sort of decisions that Mondrian must have had to make about the role of any particular sketch or 'teckeningen', for it can be seen that drawings always played a vital role in the creative process of the transitions that took place in his work.

During his Cubist period, as can be clearly seen in his 'Two sketch books', Mondrian was deeply concerned with two fundamental problems the resolution of which were to have a decisive influence upon the subsequent development of his work. The two problems were of course interconnected, they were the conscious resolution of an a priori schema for synthesising the stimulus of his intuitive perceptions and secondly the construction of an a priori visual language.

From the very beginnings of his career as an artist Mondrian had, if only in the most tentatively conscious manner, struggled with this two-fold problem. In retrospective reflection in his last essay<sup>(11)</sup>, written in 1942 Mondrian recognised that he had always been a realist, by this



he did not mean a painter of singular objects perceived in sensible reality, but an artist concerned with the multilevelled, relational determinate essences of reality. In his early years as far back as those of the period circa 1890, it can be seen that tentatively Mondrian was searching for a conceptual schema, but one that was also true to the intuitions formed by his perceptions. But it was not until his Cubist period that his search began to take determinate form whereas previously it had been indeterminate and submerged beneath the short lived but overpowering forces of literary and subjectivist preoccupations. It should though be remembered that those influences played an important part in the dialectic process of Mondrian's evolution. In addition those influences gave to Mondrian the vitally important experience of the synthetic use of colour and it's potential in terms of colour space articulation. It can I think be assumed that Mondrian found his Luminist style of painting, apart from being closely relateable to sensible reality, to be too biased towards idiosyncratic subjectivity, being so it gave a false apprehension of reality. The reasons for the scepticism that he must have developed during this period, were no doubt based upon the influence of his evolving universal conception.

A complete appraisal of Mondrian's whole evolution will show that whenever he began to near the pinnacle of excellence in any of the stylistic idioms within which he worked, and this must include the sub stylistic divisions that can be made in his period of Neo plastic painting (1918 to 1944), he began to search for a 'new way'. Mondrian's attitude can, I suggest, be termed intuitively sceptical, for creative success seems always to have stimulated in Mondrian intense questioning. His sceptical attitude became an essential part of Mondrian's evolutionary process, works that epitomise these points for instance are 'Great landscape 1907', 'Dune landscape 1911' and 'Composition in black and white 1917'.

The pictorial language that Mondrian was evolving during these years became increasingly synthetic: through this development he was able to come to grips with the possible solution to his aim, which was the expression of unity in duality. Around this concept he was constructing his Universal philosophy of art and artistic morality.

Mondrian wrote retrospectively about the nature of these problems in many of his essays but a particularly apt description is to be found in his essay 'Plastic art and pure plastic art'<sup>(12)</sup>.

The only problem in art is to achieve a balance between the subjective and objective. But it is of the utmost importance that this problem should be solved in the realm of plastic art - technically as it were and not in the realm of thought. The work of art must be produced, constructed! One must create as objectively as possible a representation of forms and relations.

Later in the same essay:

Since art is in essence universal, it's expression cannot rest upon a subjective view. Our human capacities do not allow a perfectly objective view, but that does not imply that the plastic expression of art is based on a subjective conception. Our subjectivity realises but does not create the work of art! (12 *ibid.*)

Even though these remarks were made as late as 1937 they were both prescriptive and descriptive. In the second of these quotations the evolution of Mondrian's universal concept was succinctly described and it was at this point that he had arrived in 1917/18 when he became conscious of the content of these concepts.

The drawing that will be considered in the next paragraphs 'Untitled drawing: circa 1918', played, I consider, an important part in Mondrian's resolution of the problems contained in his transition from Post Cubist Abstraction to Neo plastic painting, as epitomised by such a painting as 'Lozenge with grey lines', 1918 or 'Composition checkerboard', 1919. What will now be shown is that these two paintings and others in the same series can all be derived in terms of their structure from the 'Untitled drawing'.

One of the main problems that was an inherent part of this transitional period was brought into sharp focus by Dr Schoenmaekers' propositions for 'plastic mathematics'; a universal expressive means through which and by which the Universe in the cosmological sense could be apprehended. It is likely that Mondrian had at this critical juncture to consider this influential system against the schematic structural system that he had evolved during his Cubist and Post Cubist periods. Schoenmaekers' system proposed an even greater degree of objectivity. Mondrian was to discover that the application and development of 'plastic mathematics', would transform the relatively indeterminate schema of his Post Cubist



period into a determinate schema. For in the instance of his Cubist and Post Cubist paintings the schema of apprehension upon which Mondrian based his decisions was the result of an intuitive synthesis based in empirical judgements. Whereas 'Untitled drawing', was an expression of an 'a priori synthetic judgement', and being such was 'plastic', in the sense of Schoenmaekers' conception of 'plastic mathematics'. Mondrian must have become acutely conscious of this dialectical difference and realised that it constituted the fundamental transformation that took place in his work between 1917 and 1918.

I have purposely employed Immanuel Kant's terminology<sup>(13)</sup>, to describe some of the nature of Mondrian's development at this time. For Kant's identification and distinction between the synthetic nature of the two forms of intuition, which results in a priori and posteriori intuitions and judgements, is descriptive of the transformations that took place in Mondrian's work during this period. I think that it should also be noted here, that throughout his writings Mondrian gave no clear statement as to his understanding of the nature of intuition, whilst on the other hand he continually stressed that intuition was of fundamental importance to the creative process. But I think that it is clear from his paintings and drawings that he had a clear understanding of the creative significance of intuition in its manifold forms. In his writings he appeared to give to intuition a mystical form and position more in keeping with the concept of intuition postulated in Theosophic tracts, such as those by Madam Blavatsky.

Paintings that have been previously discussed, such as 'Composition in black and white', were constructed using the intersections of vertical and horizontal lines forming a cross; (the plus and minus symbol). This symbol Mondrian had found to have multilevelled meaning, a formal device of perceptual schemata and a conceptual symbol representing the cosmos; traceable into the depths of ancient philosophy. The meaning that the cross had always been given was that it expressed the unity of spirit and matter; the subject and the object; as a balanced relationship, as such it symbolised the equilibrium of the Universe. Mondrian, as has been shown, was critical of Schoenmaekers' use of this symbol as he felt that its traceable teleological significance restricted individual



creative development. Mondrian's solution to this problem was to subsume the overt symbolism of the cross into the all over grid structure of his Neo plastic paintings. In this way he maintained the ninety degree determinancy of the cross whilst restricting it's symbolism.

The basic form of the 'Untitled drawing', is a square, which is based upon the determinate nature of the opposites of horizontal and vertical. The position of the square within the rectangular area of the canvas upon which Mondrian constructed this drawing is important for the width of the two rectangular areas outside of the edges of the square is equal, as well as being in exact proportionate width to the square. The symmetrical placement of the square in the rectangle is again interesting for measurement shows that the overall rectangle is proportionately the same as the two canvases that Mondrian used to paint the two 'Checkerboard compositions', of 1919. This drawing was, I suggest, the visual and formal basis of Mondrian's 'plastic mathematics', and thus even if only in an indirect way of all of his subsequent work.

The rudimentary manner in which Mondrian divided the area of the square provided him with a more determinate solution to the problem of an equilibrated structural surface than that which he seems to have arrived at with 'Composition colour planes with grey contours'. Mondrian constructed on the square two grids, the first of these being the primary grid which he drew on the ninety degree axis of the square, the second grid was derived from the first by introducing the diagonals of all the secondary squares formed through the construction of the first grid. The second grid thus overlays the first at forty five degrees. By constructing these two grids Mondrian also found that he had established an infinitely flexible proportionate system. A system that also in fact relates to the simple proportionate system developed and employed by the Ancient Egyptians in their explanation of the cosmos and for the construction of their temples, such as the Great Pyramid:<sup>(14)</sup> For by constructing a forty five degree grid upon the primary ninety degree grid Mondrian produced a set of squares or diamonds in the ratio of two to one.

The analysis of this drawing was conducted through the process of considering it's structure in separate transparent layers, numbers 1 to 6, numbers 1 and 2 abstract the elements of the forty five degree grid,



3 abstracted the ninety degree grid, the fourth the vertical elements of the crosses, 5 the horizontal elements, the sixth layer abstracted the figures and letters which Mondrian used to paginate the ninety degree axial squares. The seventh layer was constructed to demonstrate the projection of both the grids to the edges of the canvas rectangle. This projective extension of the grids also provides, in vertical axis, sixteen equal divisions of the same proportions as those which Mondrian constructed for the grid structure of both his 'Checkerboard compositions'.

Once this initial process of abstraction had been completed various tests were carried out upon a number of Mondrian's paintings. The first painting to be submitted to this process was 'Lozenge with grey lines'. For the construction of this seminal work Mondrian employed a square canvas, upon which he constructed a grid in exactly the same manner as the ninety degree axial grid of 'Untitled drawing', over this he drew a secondary grid formed by joining all the diagonals of the basic primary grid. The combination of these two grids acted as the determinates for all of the rectangular forms that make up the composition of the painting. The process of layered abstraction was again used to consider the complete structure of this painting. With the inclusion of the first two grids described above, eight layers were abstracted from this painting, revealing all the linear elements out of which the total structure of this painting can be accurately constructed. It can be seen with the help of these layered abstractions, that Mondrian must have worked upon this painting in a manner that can be described as controlled or determinate freedom, for there is no evidence that he employed any form of system other than that of deducing the structure from the first two basic grids through an intuitive and visual process. Everything that is a part of the structure is in a simple proportionate relationship to those two basic grids, but is not the result of a strictly applied mathematical progression. The second painting that I chose to submit to the analytic process of layered abstraction was 'Composition in diamond', 1919. The basic grid of this painting I found to be exactly the same as that which Mondrian used for the construction of 'Lozenge with grey lines'. Upon these two basic layers I laid a third, the forty five degree grid of the 'Untitled drawing'. The combination of these three



layers (which are in fact three layers of untitled drawing) rotated through forty five degrees, gave Mondrian the basic structure of this second lozenge or diamond painting. Once again he was able to work with freedom of construction from the implications of these basic determinates. In opposition to the result achieved with 'Lozenge with grey lines', Mondrian gave emphasis to the squares and rectangles that he had derived from the basic grid, this he did through the application of colour, which was a muted balance or harmony of yellow, red and blue. This form of experimental progression was exactly the same process as that previously described in relation to other groups of Mondrian's paintings: for example the experiments that he conducted with the two works 'Composition in colour: A and B', 1917. In this painting Mondrian mixed the earth colours and white with the primary colours so as to achieve a balance between the cool and the warm colours and between the light and dark tonalities.

There were four Lozenge or diamond paintings completed by Mondrian during this period, for the construction of each of these Mondrian employed the grid system that has been described above. He had thereby discovered a simple but fundamental structure, that was at the same time both determinate in it's macro application whilst allowing for an almost infinite variety of proportionate and formal relationships to be established.

During the same years that Mondrian painted the Lozenge series of paintings he also painted two works of a related but different type, they formed an important part in the progression and continuity of the experimental evolution with which Mondrian was involved. It is likely that he was able to prove for his own benefit, that the system that has to be employed for the resolution of their basic structure and proportions was lacking in the intuitive freedom that he had discovered in the Lozenge series of experimental paintings. The title of these two works is 'Composition checkerboard: light colours and dark colours'. Both of these paintings, as mentioned earlier have the same rectangular proportions as the canvas area of 'Untitled drawing'. The drawing is ten squares wide in horizontal axis and eight squares high in it's vertical axis; when projected to edges of the canvas. The division of the two



paintings in their vertical axes, into sixteen equal widths, can simply be arrived at by starting from the basic square grid, of 'Untitled drawing', the crosses drawn by Mondrian indicate the points at which this division should take place. The division of the ten squares into sixteen rectangular areas can only be achieved through the use of arithmetic calculations: viz the horizontal length of the canvas 106 cms has to be divided by sixteen thus producing length of 6.625 as the width of the rectangles in horizontal axis, their vertical length being 5.375, this subdivision though was the result of geometric division and not arithmetic division.

Through his experimentation with mathematical systems as a determining factor in his process of composition Mondrian had with the completion of these two checkerboard paintings evolved two systems of division whereby he could construct a surface which would allow him to achieve a flexible but all over quality. It was a quality that solved the problem, persistent in the paintings of 1917, of an imbalance between figure and field. The distinction of the parts of a painting into those two categories could no longer be made, the ambiguous space of the paintings of 1917 had given way to an asymmetrical two dimensional balanced surface resulting in a unified whole which can be described as a concrete painting. This development was of very considerable importance to the theories that Mondrian was at the same time devising. He was the first artist to achieve an 'equilibrated', pictorial surface of such a concrete nature. The manner that he arrived at his solution, through experiment with the two systems, was completely consistent with the sort of pictorial experimentation that he had made throughout all the earlier stages of his work. The 'Lozenge', paintings and the 'Checkerboard', paintings clearly demonstrate the dialectical quality of Mondrian's development. For although there are many similarities between these two groups of paintings, there are also fundamental differences such as the use of numerical calculation that Mondrian must have employed to resolve the structure of the 'Checkerboard', paintings: whilst the compositional structure of the 'Lozenges', was resolved through intuitive and perceptual judgements.

But on the 'Checkerboard', paintings this same freedom of intuitive choice can be found in Mondrian's choice and placement of colours which follow no colour sequence, as the rectangular structure is constructed according to a simple sequence.

With these two groups of paintings and their related drawing it can be said that Mondrian had given visual form to a fundamental point which was the realization of his own form of 'plastic mathematics', which was to act as the basis for all his subsequent Neo plastic paintings. 'Plastic mathematics', as proposed by Dr Schoenmaekers and interpreted by Mondrian was a system whereby the artist by emphasising the simple but fundamental elements of the cross was in possession of a system which made it possible for intuition to act in harmony with the logical implications of the system. Individual freedom of choice was possible within a fundamental and determinate system and both could be seen to exist in harmonious equilibrium. In previous paintings and other forms of art this visual unity had been hidden beneath the veils of illusionism. For Mondrian, art as he now understood it could be seen to be universal, manifesting visually the unity of spirit and matter. This expression the Theosophists and Dr Schoenmaekers taught was necessary for a spiritual regeneration to take place in man. For many years Mondrian had searched for a personal understanding of the 'true value of opposites', in his unconscious and conscious life: at this point in his life he had reached this understanding and evolved the means of its expression, at the same time finding that they were both interdependent.

During the period 1918 to 1919 Mondrian executed five other paintings the structures of which are all derivable from the system he used to construct the 'Lozenge' series. But none of these paintings were composed as 'Lozenges', two were squares and three were rectangles. The experiments that Mondrian conducted with these paintings helped to develop the potential of the intuitive and reasoned resolution of composition and also to explore an area so far not resolved in his Neo plastic work: the use of a system of colour which embodied the same freedoms as the structural system of 'plastic mathematics'. The one that he actually evolved was of course the reduction of his palette to the pigmentary primaries, red, yellow and blue; with the non colours



black, white and grey. Mondrian, as were the other members of De Stijl, was influenced by the work of the German scientist Wilhelm Ostwald who had researched and published a book on colour theory<sup>(15)</sup>.

As with his acceptance of the fundamental structural determinates of vertical and horizontal degree axes Mondrian's adoption of the pigmentary primaries was necessary if he was to completely evolve a consistent Universal form of painting. Although he had explored the pigmentary primary area of colour during his Luminist period, there was a difference, one that was influenced by Ostwald. It was the conscious identification and use of black, white and grey as non colours.

What can be understood from the 'Checkerboard' paintings and from all the paintings that Mondrian subsequently produced was that not only was he free to compose within the macrocosmos of a determinate system of structure, the same freedom also existed in relation to his use of colour. The primaries could be subtractively adjusted and additively juxtaposed with each other and with the non colours. In the instance of both colour and structure the individual and the Universal existed as an equilibrated flexible whole.

The 'Untitled drawing: circa 1918', was a study of very great importance to the evolution of the determinate plastic structure of all the paintings so far discussed in relation to it, which Mondrian executed during the first years of his Neo plastic period (1918 to 1944). For if consideration is given to the diagrams, those which have been discussed, it can be seen that not only did this drawing act as the primary study for the paintings above considered, but it acted in a far more extensive role, whether directly or indirectly cannot be ascertained. Consider the two paintings 'Lozenge with grey lines', and any of the other 'Lozenge', compositions of 1919, each of which has been shown to have been derivable from the grids constructed upon 'Untitled drawing'. This group of paintings also contains, again either directly or indirectly, all of the compositional possibilities of Mondrian's subsequent evolution. A painting such as 'Composition with red, yellow, blue and black', 1921 is a microcosmos of the compositional possibilities contained in the 'Lozenge', series of paintings. The 'Untitled drawing', is then a drawing without any aesthetic value in the traditional meaning, but it is a drawing

that was at the root of the New Aesthetic evolved by Mondrian and De Stijl in opposition to the old aesthetic.

That Mondrian considered the 'Untitled drawing', to be logical if in only a rudimentary sense, can be seen in the manner in which he paginated each of the squares with alphabetical and numerical progression, according to simple but fundamental and immutable rules. But these rules he understood as being infinitely flexible through the stimulus of intuition and reason.

- (4) So far only primary factors of Neo plastic painting have been considered. There are a number of secondary factors; those that resulted from Mondrian's desire to ensure that his paintings would be perceived with the utmost clarity. To this end Mondrian became deeply involved with the processes of framing his paintings. This procedure began during his landscape period but became important during his period of Luminist painting.

A painting that demonstrates Mondrian's serious experiments with frames during his Luminist period is one of the 'Church at Domburg', series of 1909. The Luminists, as has been shown earlier, owed a considerable debt to Seurat's influence not only in terms of divisionism but also to the integrated use of frames. For Seurat as a part of his pictorial experiments had set precedents for the Luminists by continuing his pointillist paint surfaces out across the frame. But he still retained the canvas in a recessed position to the frame, thus maintaining the traditional role of the frame, whilst extending it's possibilities. The frame that Mondrian placed around his painting 'Church at Domburg', was in a position so that the canvas projected about half a centimetre in front of the leading edge of the frame. Thereby the whole surface of the painting was projected physically in front of it's frame. It was an intriguing experiment for it placed the role of the pictorial surface in a completely new context than that which had ever been employed before. Mondrian through this simple means had established the picture plane as a tactile two dimensional plane in sensory space. The actual subject of the painting does though introduce a somewhat paradoxical element into this invention, for the view of the church is recessional in it's pictorial space. But it must be remembered that at this stage Mondrian's



work was in transition from bucolic landscape painting to his major Luminist statements of 1910 to 1911. As throughout his whole evolution possibilities such as this appeared at one point in time, manifesting in one or two works, and then were for a time submerged beneath other more powerful concerns, reappearing in a more considered form at a latter date. One problem about trying to trace the complete lineage of this important development is that the frames on many of Mondrian's better known paintings have been stripped off and replaced by more utilitarian frames to meet the needs of Galleries and Museums. This has of course had the required preserving effect but it has unfortunately stripped many of the works of a part of the means of their expression. There is also evidence coming to light showing that Mondrian went to considerable trouble with the colouring of his frames. A painting that still retains the outward manifestations of these experiments is 'Composition', 1916, previously discussed. Along the lower edge of this painting Mondrian placed a strip of wood and then extended the colour used on the canvas onto the strip. It appears that in some instances Mondrian's frames have been replaced or if not replaced their very considered colour has been altered to fit a view of his work which is not entirely consistent with the totality of his Universal ideas and vision.

His framing experiments were not simply formal devices; as the paintings were intended to be simply formal, the frames were an integral part of the content being the concrete manifestation of the Universal Idea. The projection of the canvas surface of 'Church at Domburg', into space beyond the frame, thus emphasising it's two dimensional quality and thereby giving or heightening the possibility of the expression of a concrete quality that Mondrian was during 1910 to 1911 trying to realise in his consciousness.

- (5) The content of Mondrian's painting had evolved into the expression of a universal conception of reality. Dr Schoenmaekers had in his two books written extensively upon this concept, basing his propositions upon an interpretation of Hegel's conception of Universal Reality. The means that Schoenmaekers chose for the expression of this concept were unlike those of Hegel, for he chose to express it visually through the cross, as has been previously shown.

The absolute straight line was for Schoenmaekers the absolute line, the cross figure was the absolute figure, the figure of the understanding of first order of absolute subjectivity and objectivity, consisting of ray and line. The absolute line characterised for Schoenmaekers absolute time whilst the absolute ray characterised absolute space. The ray being vertical and the line horizontal<sup>(16)</sup>.

Schoenmaekers in his books developed the meaning of this conceptual construct. Absolute space he said was the absolute space of the universe and the universal 'self-energy'. This he symbolised with the ray and the vertical line. The horizontal line in Schoenmaekers' system symbolised matter, the matter of the universe. Schoenmaekers' cross symbol was, he asserted, the concrete expression of the creator and the created, of subject and object. Hegel had termed the understanding of this unity 'consciousness', which Schoenmaekers also accepted.<sup>(17)</sup> In his system Schoenmaekers developed an idea of the proportions of subjectivity and objectivity as an expression of the changing nature of consciousness. He was then able to explain that his system of 'plastic mathematics' could be used to give exact concrete expression to the proportions of subjectivity and objectivity. 'Plastic proportions', he asserted, were the proportions of inward and outward life.

The plastic mathematical system that Schoenmaekers propounded could be used as an accurate 'tool' for the understanding and expression of speculative thought. It's use would give a proportionately accurate view of the relationships of Cosmic order, of spirit and matter, of the subjective and objective. Schoenmaekers classified his system of thought in the same category as that of Hegel, terming it 'Concrete Pantheism'. His own system he believed was generally the same as Hegel's in that Cosmic understanding was expressed in terms of an expressive unity of the subjective and objective, of inner and outer life. His proposition of 'plastic mathematics' Schoenmaekers asserted was evolved through a dialectical refinement of Hegel's system. But both systems he believed were a dialectical alteration and correction of what he termed Spinoza's 'Abstract Pantheism'. For although Spinoza asserted with intellectual clarity the concept of pantheism, as the nature of Cosmic order, his intellectual assertion was an abstraction into intellectualism, lacking



in or an inbalance of the expressive unity of the subjective and objective. Schoenmaekers obviously accepted the criticism that Hegel had made of Spinoza's on the same grounds. The 'Concrete Pantheism' of Hegel and Schoenmaekers, with their inherent systems, Schoenmaekers asserted, resolved the problem that Hegel's criticism of Spinoza had revealed.

The importance of Schoenmaekers' Hegelian-based 'Concrete Pantheism', was without doubt central to Mondrian's evolving consciousness of what he himself had been trying to express and what he had come to realise all art tried to express. The adoption by Mondrian of the term Plastic (Neo plasticism) was quite obviously an adaptation of Schoenmaekers' terminology and thereby referred to the same expression of proportions, of inward and outward, creator and created, energy and stuff, that Schoenmaekers gave expression to with his system.

Neo plasticism as Mondrian was developing it in the period 1918 to 1920 was becoming an art of 'Concrete Pantheism', and as such none of the formal means evolved and employed were arbitrary or heterogeneous for they were homogeneous with self generating thought.

The discussion of Mondrian's framing experiments which triggered off a consideration of the influence of Dr Schoenmaekers must then be seen as being an integral part of Mondrian's plastic art. Further examples of his use of this system of framing can be seen on a number of his paintings of the period 1918 to 1937 in the collection of his works at the Gemeente Museum in The Hague. Two major examples being 'Composition: with red, yellow and blue', 1921 and 'Composition with yellow lines', 1933.

Mondrian believed that the plastic means that he had evolved expressed the dynamic. A belief that he wrote about in many of his essays. The term 'dynamic' has in the history of Modern Art come to be associated with expressionism of the Futurist Artists, who employed a concept of dynamism as a basic principle of their work. But the dynamism to which they referred was more readily knowable as mechanistic dynamism. Mondrian's conception of the dynamic referred to the energy of the inner, the spirit, visualised by Schoenmaekers as

the ray. Mondrian designated the vertical line the masculine element, the horizontal line the feminine <sup>(18)</sup>. For Schoenmaekers, propagation was represented by the horizontal line, evolution being represented by the vertical line, propagation being the outer expression of evolution, which he as did Mondrian, understood as the inner living impulse. Therefore the dynamism of Mondrian's Neo plastic painting became the expression of the inner living evolutionary impulse in harmonious balance with representation in harmonious expression of natural stuff, in which it also had to be embodied. The interplay of relationships and proportions was thus the expression of the proportionate relationship between the inner evolutionary impulses and the outer reality.

By 1921 Mondrian's experimentation with the possibilities of the palette of colours he employed during his late Cubist period had given way entirely to the articulation of the pure primaries and non colours. He worked during that year upon a series of very beautiful paintings in which he created different intensities through dimension of area and colour value. The painting 'Composition 1 with red, yellow and blue', has as it's basic presence a cool blue quality created through the dimensions of the areas painted with this colour. The areas of red and yellow being much smaller but of greater intensity. With these simple but sophisticated compositional and colour means Mondrian was able to achieve a harmonious unity upon a knowable two dimensional surface.

In the course of examining the geometric potential of the previously mentioned 'Untitled drawing', consideration was given and experiments made with paintings from 1921, 1931, 1933 and 1942/43. The aim of the experiments was to ascertain how closely Mondrian's subsequent paintings after 'Untitled drawing', related to what is termed the system of 'Ancient Geometry', <sup>(19)</sup>. The intention was not though to set out to try to prove that Mondrian knew and used from 1918 onwards this geometric system. For as had been shown in Dr Schoenmaekers' 'Principles of plastic mathematics', the system that can be deduced from the essential elements of the cross are infinitely flexible whilst still retaining exact proportions. Schoenmaekers' system was therefore akin to that of 'Ancient Geometry' and in fact might have been partly constructed from his studies into mysticism and Theosophy as his



writings show. But the way that Mondrian came to use these plastic principles retained the essential purity of what Schoenmaekers termed the 'absolute first order'. The relevance of the term 'plastic proportion', needs here to be considered again, for Schoenmaekers defined it as the proportion of inner and outer life. In relation to geometry, such as that used by Mondrian, it is the unity of the balance between his inner determinations, his subjective being and the objective determinates of the ray and line forming the cross. This unity allows for the flexibility that Mondrian through Schoenmaekers' influence developed.

Therefore although the works selected from the years mentioned above can be deduced from the objective application of the principles of 'Ancient Geometry', this was not the manner in which Mondrian constructed them, because it is not when used objectively a plastic process in terms of the criteria described above. This form of analysis based as it is in the essential objective elements of the mathematics used by Mondrian, does demonstrate the continuity of his use of plastic mathematics from 1918 to 1944. Thereby showing that his work retained its plastic unity from the inception of his Universal plastic system in 1918.

- (6) The works that constitute Mondrian's period of painting from 1921 to 1930 became increasingly more refined and simple, a painting such as 'Composition with great blue plane', 1921 or 'Composition 2', were obviously precursors for the paintings that are most usually associated with the 1930's, but in fact these paintings began in 1926, the year after Mondrian resigned from De Stijl. In that year Mondrian painted a 'Lozenge', painting entitled 'Composition with blue', which consisted of his plastic determinates, one vertical and one horizontal line. It was in relation to the previous 'Lozenge', paintings extremely reductive. But the proportionate decisions that Mondrian made are simply traceable in terms of their precedents or his evolutionary process, to such paintings as the previously mentioned 'Composition 2'. The change that took place in Mondrian's work between 1918 and 1921/22 can be termed a process of reduction and consequent purification of his style. Consider for example the complexity of the painting 'Composition checkerboard', and the painting 'Composition with red, yellow and blue', 1921 and

'Composition 2', 1922. There is immediate visual evidence of a continuing reduction and stylistic purification.

As the painting 'Composition with blue', 1926 demonstrates Mondrian's reductive process was applied to all the plastic means at his disposal, planes, lines and colours were all reduced. One of the next changes that Mondrian introduced was to vary the proportion of the lines employed to determine the proportion of the planes. It appears that this development of the possibility of proportionate relationships was introduced in about 1925 and in fact manifested itself in the paintings that Mondrian painted in response to Theo van Doesburg's 'Elementarist Counter Compositions', one of the most impressive of these works being 'Lozenge composition in a square with red, yellow and blue', 1925. A painting that embodied all the plastic means that Mondrian had in his first eleven essays, published in De Stijl, established as the essential elements of Neo plastic painting.

The years between 1917 when Mondrian began to resolve the issue of concrete plastic art and 1925 when he resigned from De Stijl were critically important to the development of all the major aspects of his mature oeuvre. In his letter to Querido in 1909 Mondrian had written, 'It seems to me that you recognise the important relationship between philosophy and art, and it is exactly this relationship which most painters deny.'<sup>(20)</sup>

The period called here 'the critical years', had given to Mondrian absolutely substantial proof that this relationship existed and could be manifested in visual terms. For he like Dr Schoenmaekers had developed a plastic visual system the understanding of which would be an insight into the ontological essence of the cosmos. This understanding Hegel had asserted could only be gained in it's purity through philosophy. He had in his system constructed an evolutionary scale in which art played an important part but beneath that of religion which was placed below philosophy. Dr Schoenmaekers had disputed this assertion and had influenced Mondrian to take up a similar position to that of his own, one in which Mondrian found for himself a true equal connection between philosophy and art. But it should be noted that Mondrian in his entire writings did not, as Van Doesburg did, assert that art would supersede philosophy.



'Elementarism', Van Doesburg wrote, 'begins where philosophy leaves off as spontaneous, vital manifestation of consciousness, the latter disciplines have become sterile and obsolete.'<sup>(21)</sup>

Mondrian believed and asserted in his latter essays, 'The realisation of Neo plasticism in the distant future and architecture today'<sup>(22)</sup>, that art and by inference all other separate disciplines would dissolve into the unified whole of man's collective consciousness.

But in a latter essay of Van Doesburg's than the one just quoted from entitled 'Comments on the basis of concrete painting', he wrote in the first paragraph as follows.

1. We speak of concrete and not abstract painting, because we have finished with the period of research and speculative experience.

In their search for purity artists were obliged to abstract from natural forms in which the plastic elements were hidden in order to eliminate natural forms . . . .

We speak of concrete and not abstract painting because nothing is more real than a line, a colour, a surface.

I have introduced these sentences from Van Doesburg's writings because they concisely describe the nature of the dialectical process that had taken place in Mondrian's work between 1917 and 1925 and was to continue until his death in 1944. The same description could be given using Dr Schoenmaekers terminology, in a seemingly analogous manner, 'Abstract Pantheism' had been replaced by 'Concrete Pantheism'. Except that it is not an analogous description for Mondrian had fused the problem of religion with which he had struggled for so long with art and indeed with philosophy.

1. The theoretical distinction between the term universal in an empirical interpretation and in a Universalist interpretation is considered in the chapter dealing directly with Mondrian's writings.
2. Erwin Panofsky. Idea: a concept in Art Theory. Tr Joseph J. S. Peake. Pb originally as Idea: ein beitrag zur begriffschichte der alteren Kunst-Theorie. 1924. Pb Icon editions: Harper and Row New York 1968.
3. Bart van der Leek 1878 to 1958. Autobiographical memoirs. Rijks Museum Kroller Muller , Otterloo Nederland. 18 July to 5 September 1976.
4. H. L. C. Jaffé. De Stijl , Thames and Hudson, p111.
5. Bart van der Leek compiles an autobiographical memoir partly as a result for information from Holland and elsewhere; June 1957, op cit 3 pp 68-75.
6. Robert Welsh commented upon the uniqueness of this painting in his catalogue Piet Mondrian 1872 to 1944, Toronto, Philadelphia and The Hague 1966, p166.
7. Piet Mondrian. The rationality of NeoPlasticism. De Stijl vol 1 no 5 continued vol 1 no 7, pp 43-54 and pp 73-77 . Jaffé De Stijl, pp60-68
8. Loc cit see n5, pp71-77.
9. Piet Mondrian. The new plastic as abstract real painting. The plastic means and composition. De Stijl vol 1 no 3 pp 29-31. and vol 1 no4 pp 41-44. Jaffé Thames and Hudson pp 54-60.
10. Op cit see n 9 , p57.
11. Piet Mondrian. Towards the true vision of reality. Pb by the Valentine Dudensing Gallery New York 1942. Rp Wittenborn New York 1945.
12. Piet Mondrian. Plastic art and pure plastic art. Circle pb by Faber and Faber 1937, rp 1971, pp42-43.
13. Immanuel Kant's : Critique of pure reason, tr Norman Kemp Smith. Pb by Macmillan 1929 rp 1973.
14. Tons Brunes. The Secrets of Ancient Geometry. Vol 1 ch 7. Pb Rhodos Copenhagen 1967.



15. Ostwald. The colour primer. Pb in 1916 as Die Farbenfibel. Tr 1931  
Faber Birren Rp Van Nostrand Reinhold 1969.
16. Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers . Beginnelsen der beeldende wiskunde.  
(The principles of plastic mathematics ), ch 2 and 3.
17. Ibid p 81.
18. From the natural to the abstract: from the inderterminate to the  
determinate. Conclusion nature and spirit as male and female  
elements. De Stijl vol 1 no 12 pp 140-147. Jaffé Thames and Hudson  
pp 88-93.
19. Op cit see n 14.
- 20 . Piet Mondrian. Pb in The Controleur Oct 1904. Two Sketch Books  
Meulenhoff pp9-10.
21. Theo van Doesburg. Painting and plastic art:Elementarism. 1926.  
De Stijl series X111, 78, 1926/7 p 82-7. Theo van Doesburg Joost  
Baljeu Studi Vista 1974, pp163-164.
22. Piet Mondrian. The realization of Neo Plasticism in the distant  
future and in architecture today. De Stijl vol 5 no 3 pp 41-47, no5 pp65-71.  
Jaife, Thames and Hudson pp163-171.
23. Op cit see n21, p181.

Chapter 8. Mondrian's theoretical development and philosophic contribution to De Stijl.

- Subchapters:
- (1) .Mondrian's first written theoretical statements, 1909
  - (2) Colour symbolism and Mondrian's relationship to it's history.
  - (3) The beginnings of Mondrian's divergence from the mainstream of the Avant Garde.
  - (4) The philosophic content of the 'Two sketchbooks'.
  - (5) Mondrian and Bart van der Leek; fundamental differences.
  - (6) Mondrian's connection with the traditions of philosophic thought established by Plato and other Greek philosophers.
  - (7) The founding of De Stijl.
  - (8) The influence of Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers upon Mondrian and upon the basic premises which formed the foundations of De Stijl.
  - (9) Mondrian's theoretical contribution to the first editions of De Stijl.
  - (10) Mondrian's resignation from the De Stijl Group in 1925.
  - (11) Footnotes.



## Chapter 8

- (1) The beginning of Mondrian's public involvement with theoretical writing first became manifest in a letter published by the critic Israel Querido<sup>(1)</sup> who had reviewed the retrospective exhibition of paintings of the Amsterdam artists C. R. H. Spoor, Piet Mondrian and Jan Sluyters, held at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, during January 1909. The letter indicates clearly Mondrian's evolving intention to discard visual references to sensible material reality, for he wrote to Querido about the painting called 'Devotion', 1908;

With that work I only envisaged a girl conceived devotedly, or viewed devotedly, or with great devotion, and by giving the hair that sort of red, to tone down the material side of things, to suppress any thoughts about 'hair', 'costume', etc. and to stress the spiritual. I believe that colour and line can do much towards this end. (ibid) (2)

This letter needs here to be considered carefully, for it was the manifestation of the personal theoretical precedents for those theories that were posited in the 'Two sketchbooks',<sup>(3)</sup> and in the writings of 1917 to 1925 in which Mondrian's philosophic concepts took clear and yet complex literary form<sup>(4)</sup>.

In the previous chapter a list of fifteen headings was given which described the subject content on which the notes in the 'Two sketchbooks' treated. For the sake of comparative precision it is now intended to give a list of the subjects about which Mondrian wrote in this letter; analysis shows that there were six general areas which are here given: (1), the role of art, (2), the expressive means of this role, (3), the need for contemporary attitudes, (4), criticisms of contemporary Dutch art and the Dutch public, (5), general recognitions (philosophic), (6), specific recognitions.

I shall now give a detailed account of these subject areas, giving the sub-titles that express the content complexity of this very early piece of Mondrian's published writings.

- (1) The role of art: the development of spiritual consciousness as universal meaning revealing the great intrinsic truths and values.
- (2) Expressive means of this role; metaphorical use of colour and line, use of pure colour and pointillist technique.

- (3) Need for contemporary attitudes with an emphasis on clear thought and clarity of technique, thus art must be of its time; therefore it must employ the generally known, to symbolise a deep substratum. Conscious awareness that forms of expressions are ever changing.
- (4) Criticism of contemporary Dutch art and public thought for their over-emphasis and over-involvement with temporal matters, which was an implied criticism of Mondrian's contemporary artists' lack of consciousness of their role in relation to their time.
- (5) General recognitions; of art to philosophy, of the dangers of developing art into occult regions beyond the areas of knowledge of normal human understanding of the expression of the universal beauty in the works of the Old Masters and their unconscious expression of this quality.
- (6) Specific recognitions; of Querido's and Teirlinck's roles as propagandists for the evolving new art and of Mondrian's own divergence of direction in relation to contemporary trends in art.

Querido wrote as a conclusion to the article in which he published Mondrian's reply to his first review, as follows:

The spirit of Mondrian lives not in words but in his work. Experts might easily make a game of analysing his explanations. Therefore one should respect it as an attempt at elucidating something very complex, which he is not able to master in words. (5)

What Querido was pointing to was that to understand Mondrian's oeuvre, one must understand his written explanations as being *aposteriori* to his visual work, and thus stimulated by the experiences gained through his conscious activity as a painter. But the time at which Querido wrote this comment concerning the spirit of Mondrian's work he could not have substantially predicted the evolution and objectification that Mondrian's written elucidations would take between 1912 and 1925. For Mondrian's letter, although complex in its content, as analysis has shown, was far removed in depth of understanding from the, universal principles he treated upon in the 'Two sketchbooks'. What Querido did realise, though, was the enormous struggle that Mondrian was involved with in trying to formulate and then to explain his ideas. This struggle was recognised by his friends, the Van Domselaars, for whilst Mondrian was staying with them at Laren in 1914-15 he was deeply involved with writing in note books



which he read to his hosts each evening. The role of this letter to Querido can be simply understood as an introduction to the theories with which Mondrian was to evolve himself. Three main points arise from it which were firmly stated, the idea of stressing the spiritual through art. This idea had become in the nineteenth century of major importance to the avant garde of the creative arts. It was, as shown in chapters three and four, the philosophic basis upon which Mondrian's art evolved during the periods considered in those chapters, its philosophic sources being directly traceable to romantic German and French philosophy and indirectly to the main metaphysical stream of occidental philosophy. Therefore Mondrian's pleasure in finding that Querido understood, as he did, the relationship of art and philosophy, indicates clearly his own understanding of this significant point. He put it in these terms: 'It seems to me that you recognise the important relationship between philosophy and art, and it is exactly this relationship which most painters deny.'<sup>(6)</sup>

The second very significant point that Mondrian put into clear form was his recognition of the intentions of the Symbolist painters, under whose influence he had come. For such artists as Van Gogh, Gauguin, Seurat and Munch had all, with Redon, been influential in propounding through their work and in their writings, along with the critics of the time, the possibilities of symbolic line and colour. Again this development was considered in chapter five, where it was directly related to works by the above mentioned artists, and to Mondrian's paintings of the period in which this correspondence with Querido took place.

The third important point that took substantial form in his letter was his understanding of the influence of occult knowledge upon art. It was expressed in this manner:

Should a painter progress so far that he attains definite first-hand knowledge of the finer regions through development of the finer senses, then perhaps his art will become incomprehensible to mankind, which as yet has not come to know these finer regions. And you wish to warn me against this danger. I do not know how I shall develop, but for the present I am continuing to work within the ordinary generally known terrain, which leads those who are receptive to sense the finer regions. Therefore my work still remains totally outside the occult realm, although I try to attain occult knowledge for myself in order better to understand the nature of things.



Clearly Mondrian was referring to his study of Theosophy and to the occult teachings revealed in the works published by the Theosophic Societies' publishing house. The whole movement of Theosophy was much concerned, obviously, with symbolism, both in understanding the meaning of the symbols of the ancients, and considering their direct relevance to the present. By this was meant a search for the meaning of a symbol to find if it revealed a great intrinsic truth and value, for by so doing it could be understood as being universal, and as a consequence valid and immutable during any time.

- (2) Colour and line played an important part in the symbolic language of the Theosophists and related, if slightly different groups, such as Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical Society. Steiner's notions of colour were discussed in the previous chapter, whilst those of the two Theosophists Annie Besant and Leadbetter were considered in two earlier chapters<sup>(7)</sup>. The mystical symbolism of colour took precise form in Goethe's work the 'Farbenlehre'. In that work he gave details of his colour circles and colour tetrahedron. He wrote of colour symbolism in the following manner:

Allegorical, Symbolical, Mystical Application of Colour.

915. It has been circumstantially shown above, that every colour produces a distinct impression on the mind, and thus addresses at once the eye and feelings. Hence it follows that colour may be employed for certain sensual, moral and aesthetic ends. (8)

In Goethe's scale of colour values, red symbolised imagination, yellow, reason; green sensuality and blue, understanding. These colours were applied to the facets of his tetrahedron.

Rudolf Steiner's work on the subject of colour was greatly influenced by Goethe's work, which in itself manifested, through Goethe's literary position which epitomised a general movement in scientific circles towards the study of colour. For example, in the first chapter of Ostwald's 'The colour primer'<sup>(9)</sup> an introductory history of colour was added by the editor of the book published in 1909.

In 1806 on July 3 Otto Runge wrote to Goethe on the subject of pigmentary colour, the primaries, the colours about which he wrote were red, yellow and blue. He published in 1810 his colour solid, a sphere. This was the same year that Goethe published his seminal book on colour the 'Farbenlehre'.



In 1839 M. E. Chevreul devised, in France, a colour hemisphere. His work as has been shown in an earlier chapter was of fundamental importance to the objective use of colour developed by the Impressionist and Neo Impressionist schools of painting. From Chevreul's work Seurat evolved his divisionist and additive system of painting. This system involved the primary colours of the light spectrum, red, blue and green. But in the case of Mondrian the primaries of the pigmentary spectrum were substituted for the light primaries, forming the basis of his palette for his luminist paintings and his subsequent Neo plastic paintings.

Goethe's role in the history of colour was most significant in that he recognised the importance of the empirical, objective study of colour, and thereby he was able to contribute to that study his own symbolic propositions. It was to this whole context of colour theory that Mondrian connected himself in his letter to Querido when he wrote of his attempt 'to stress the spiritual', and 'the paint is applied in pure colours set next to each other in a pointillist or diffuse manner. This is stated strongly, and yet it relates to the thought which is the basis of meaningful expression in form as I see it.'<sup>(10)</sup>

- (3) The divergence which Mondrian became conscious of was that his work was moving away from the main currents of the Dutch Avant Garde, as represented by Toorop, Sluyters, Gestel, Thorn Prikker and Spoor. For during the period 1909 to 1912 his intuitions directed him towards the development of an objective symbolic language. The precedents for this urge have been shown to have been his own personal subjectivism, which had the will to objectivate. The influence of Paul Cézanne and the Cubists, as well as Mondrian's continuing study of philosophy and theosophy. His written notes in his 'Two sketchbooks', form the next known important link in the chain of his development of written theory. They were of course referred to quite extensively in the previous chapter, but they must again here be considered with care because they form the most important connection in Mondrian's evolution as a theorist. For they demonstrate a truly evolving consciousness. The fact that at one and the same time sketches and written notes exist on the same pages suggests that two forms of reasoning were operative at the same time; empirical observation which led to a certain amount of 'inductive reasoning'. For

example if the series of sea scape sketches are considered their chronological development demonstrates this process at work. It can also be found to exist in the notes as in the following example.

Since the male principle is the vertical line a man shall recognise this element in the ascending trees of a forest; he sees his complement in the horizontal line of the sea.

The woman, with the horizontal line as characteristic element, recognises herself in the recumbent lines of the sea and sees herself complemented in the vertical lines of the forest (which represents the male element). Thus the impression differs. In art it is unified. (11)

And another pertinent quotation that gives an indication of the process outlined above.

'In order to express in form the power which emanates from nature lines must be made much blacker in the plastic arts than one ordinarily sees them in nature.' (12)

These statements, considered with some of the sketches, were in my view the result of what can be termed 'inductive reasoning', for in the particular instance of the second quotation there is a sketch which is exactly described by the text, it was the first of Mondrian's studies of the interaction of a pier and the sea. But I think that it can be correctly assumed that Mondrian was also concerned with a form of reasoning that can be termed deductive. In admitting these terms to the text I do not expect that they be understood in terms of the consistently logical application of these forms of reasoning, but in a relative sense of evolving consciousness. For it will become clear that although these forms of reasoning can be distinguished in Mondrian's evolution, that in fact the overall description of the nature of Mondrian's process of reasoning will be shown to have been synthetic. Being neither truly inductive nor deductive. The reasons for this conclusion can, I suggest, be ascribed to Mondrian's intentions which were concerned with art and not with logical consistencies.

A statement that I think can be understood as representative of the relative deductive form of reasoning in Mondrian's work during this period of intense activity is the following.

The conflict between matter and force exists in everything; between the male and the female principle. This is also in social life. The balance between the two means happiness. This is difficult to achieve partly because the one is abstract and the other is real. Through conflict comes life; change is necessary. (13)



This I term relatively deductive, because the first phrase could have resulted from empirical or 'inductive reasoning'. But when it is coupled with the second phrase and with the second sentence its deductive nature at once appears, for Mondrian was reasoning from the natural phenomenal fundamentals to their effects in a specific area 'social life'. He then continued by deducing a general but secondary statement 'the balance between the two means happiness'.

What can therefore be said in distinguishing both these forms of reasoning as being present in Mondrian's written affirmations is that, given that these two forms of reasoning are opposites, then they are by being present in his process of reasoning, consistent with his Universal concept of a theory of opposites. Consider for example the following assertion in terms of Mondrian's theory of the necessity of a unity between opposites.

'If one takes into consideration the spirit alone, then neither life nor art comes into being, if matter alone, then likewise nothing. The unity of these two things results in creation.'<sup>(14)</sup>

There are also within this assertion other complex ramifications and they will now be considered, Querido in his criticism of Mondrian's work, warned him against moving towards an art that was hidden entirely in the mystical, the unknown and the unknowable. It can be seen that Mondrian in writing about both spirit and matter in unison recognised this problem and as a consequence completely accepted the Universalist concept of the necessity of the union of spirit and matter, which was given concrete form by Hegel.

- (4) In the previous chapters when consideration was given to the importance of the 'Two sketchbooks' they were considered in the light of their relationship to the work of Baruch Spinoza. Comparisons were made between Spinoza's propositions as propounded in his book 'Ethics'.

It is intended that the following quotation from the 'Two sketchbooks' will further elucidate this relationship.

That part of the spirit which is perceptible to the senses we designate as matter. We are able to express something of this through form. . Via our senses we are unable to imitate anything that is imperceptible. Hence the elimination of matter also eliminates imitation. We arrive at the representation of other things such as the laws which hold matter together. These are the great truths which do not change. (15)



The influence of Spinoza has been cited as one of the sources which influenced Mondrian's development of his Universal and Pantheistic conception. Spinoza's influence was coupled with that of Theosophy, the distinction between these two sources is admittedly narrow, for much Theosophic writing of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was, for some of it's knowledge, indebted to Spinoza. It was though to the Theosophists and not to Spinoza that Mondrian shows his indebtedness in the 'Two sketchbooks', although in his latter essays published in the first editions of De Stijl he acknowledges his indebtedness to Spinoza.

Since modern science has confirmed the doctrine of Theosophy that matter and force (spirit) are one, there is therefore no reason to separate them. Since matter and spirit bring forth life, both must be taken into account - not one of the two. (16)

The proof of the above assertion that Theosophic writers were indebted to Spinoza is to be found in 'Isis unveiled', volume 1<sup>(17)</sup>. Where MadameBlavatsky wrote:

The eternal is the spirit of fire, which stirs up and fructifies and develops into a concrete form everything that is born of water or the primordial earth, evolved out of Brahma; but the universe is itself Brahma, and he is the universe. This is the philosophy of Spinoza, which he derived from that of Pythagoras.

And later in the same chapter,

.... both Spinoza and Bruno were led to the conclusion that God is to be sought for within nature and not without. For creation being proportional to the power of the creator, the universe as well as it's creator must be infinite and eternal, one form emanating from it's own essence and creating in it's turn another. (18)

In MadameBlavatsky's next major work 'The secret doctrine', Spinoza's influence can again be discerned<sup>(19)</sup>;

'... as already remarked polytheism is really more philosophical and correct, as to fact and nature, than is anthropomorphic monotheism.' A critical remark should be added here, for reasons of precision, for what Spinoza postulated was pantheism not polytheism, the two have similarities but are not interchangeable, they do not embody the same concept, but in the light of MadameBlavatsky's other writings I feel sure that she was making reference to pantheism.



What Mondrian wrote in terms of the subject of consciousness in the 'Two sketchbooks', should I think be included here because it develops the theme with which this chapter of the whole study is concerned; the development of Mondrian's theoretical propositions.

The focus of consciousness is being transferred from without to within. This process is a continuing one, because consciousness is evolving. As consciousness turns away from the surface, the latter is also less imitated in the art of painting. Only the rapport with life and matter must remain. This can be accomplished with very little and depends upon the intuition of the artist. By turning from the surface one comes closer to the inner laws of matter, which are also the laws of the spirit. (20)

The first sentence of this statement is revealing if only by inference within the complexity of the subjects which form the content of the notes in the 'Two sketchbooks'. To start with Mondrian was quite obviously making a reference to his own evolving consciousness, which in itself was a multilevelled entity. For at this time he was formulating the formal structures of abstract art, in addition he was relating this process to the whole general and fundamental essence of art itself. His search for the arts immutable being, he found, cross referenced the nature of his developing creative consciousness with his personal inner search for religious freedom. I use the phrase religious here for I believe it to be an apposite description of what for Mondrian freedom truly meant. The motto of the Theosophic society is: 'There is no religion higher than truth.'<sup>(21)</sup> This describes what it was that Mondrian sought, for through art he hoped to find the truth of life, he realised that; 'If art is life, art is dependent upon the development and nature of society.'<sup>(22)</sup>

This coupled with the last quotation gives a clear indication of his consciousness of the artist existing in society at all levels, rather than as a unique disconnected object. His statement that 'consciousness is being transferred from without to within', refers to the whole intellectual and cultural milieu of the time in which he lived, and consequently to his position within it.

For example, the climate of intellectual thought at the turn of the century was deeply concerned with considering the ramifications of the Doctrine of Evolution, as proposed by Darwin. The importance of this



theory was such that it affected every general aspect of scientific and theological thinking. Mondrian under the influence of Theosophy and his own evolving consciousness, became deeply aware of the importance of this theory.

The Doctrine of Evolution now teaches us how the nature of these two things changes - (matter and spirit) - by indicating to us in every period the nature thereof, we thus may understand the nature of the art of the future. A scientific basis is therefore possible. (23)

By scientific basis Mondrian did not mean what we understand science to be in our contemporary use of language, he was, of course, referring to a Theosophic or Metaphysical understanding of the term and not to a science based in a doctrine of pure empiricism. There is also another problem in this statement, that of the doctrine of evolution, which again is generally understood as being concerned with the development of species as posited by Darwin's theory. The Theosophic interpretation of this theory, based as it was in occult teaching, put forward the view that as man evolved, so he declined towards a material form away from his highest manifestation, that of the spirit. Theosophy then understood its social role as being the reuniting of the man of matter with the man of spirit, an aim that was of course influenced by the Romantic movement and Hegel's whole system.

In this context Mondrian understood that he existed within a society that had metaphysically evolved into a low existence of a consciousness based on matter becoming more and more divorced from the force of spirit. In opposition to this the true force of evolution still existed and was attempting to manifest itself for the betterment of society. This he called the 'focus of consciousness', and he thus became cognizant of the role that art played. The next quotation explains this point.

In depicting something perceptible to the senses one makes a human statement because one knows the world through one's self. If one does not represent things, a place remains for the Divine.

Attachment to matter produces suffering,

No matter, no suffering.

These laws were veiled by the surface of objects. Now they emerge in their purity. (24)

Here then is the core of Theosophic evolutionary teaching, it is as can be seen, counter to the general empirical interpretation of Darwin's Doctrine of Evolution, but as a basic premise it is central to an



understanding of the conceptual structure upon which Mondrian's own evolution was built. Knowing the world through one's self, Mondrian had found, did no more than give the suppliant an experience in chaos; objects of the sensory world appeared to have no underlying connections. The logical move from this conception was to remove the veil, to strip away the 'surface of objects'.

He was, therefore, proposing an art form that can be described by the use of a number of technical terms, words not used in the course of every day conversational description. He was, of course, proposing abstract art, but it is what he meant by that term that requires the use of technical terminology. Abstract art has come to mean any art form that is not figurative, which in a limited manner is generally correct. But this description would include much art that was the result of a process of abstraction from singular objects, for example Mondrian's own 'Still life with ginger pot', discussed in a previous chapter. The final result although providing a synthetic and intellectualised form of art still resided in the world of the senses, a world in which objects or 'the surface of objects' veiled the universal laws or accepted the concept of universals simply as names by which certain influences in a work of art could be regarded as having universal significance. For example, in the chapter concerned with Mondrian's Luminist period, I described his painting 'Red Mill', as having an immutable monumental presence. This description was empirical, for without the object, the mill, the presence could not be sensed and thus perceived.

Mondrian's evolving consciousness was that the universal laws existed immutably and were the cause of the existence of objects, therefore the truth of these laws could not be known through sensibility, but only through the formation of pure concepts. Thus any form of art that based its Universal conception upon the world of senses, thus in objects, remained an empirical form of abstraction and could not be true in the form of art for which Mondrian sort, in which 'a place remained for the divine'<sup>(25)</sup>.

- (5) To give clarity to the distinction that I am proposing between universal and empirical art, both of which Mondrian was considering, I shall now use some quotations from the writings of Bart van der Leek<sup>(26)</sup>.



It was in 1917 that 'De Stijl', was founded. I very soon disassociated myself from it, because I thought that my point of departure and goal, though apparently the same as those of the others, were in fact different from them. Even at that time I already found that the aims of the others were too one sided and that they had no solution to offer for a general renewal of painting. For me painting has always been the representation of visual life. I have never had much use for so called abstraction and that is how I still see things up to now.

And later in the same monologue:

For the first time in the history of the world it is possible, through insight actuated by the need for truth, or, in fact, through a more comprehensible insight into reality, to take things from the divine in nature and fashion them into human forms. For the square, the triangle and forms derived from them, plus opposing guidelines and the diagonal, are human. They are forms discovered or created by man and they do not rank as cosmic reality.

In his essay 'The place of modern painting in architecture'<sup>(27)</sup>, Bart van der Leek wrote '... more than that, in its extension from the individual to the universal it will claim from the building'. For Van der Leek the process of art was to evolve towards a generalisation of corporeal form expressed on a flat surface; the canvas or a wall. Thus for Van der Leek his understanding of the term Universal can be defined as empirical universalism. In opposition to the universalist concept of Mondrian and Van Doesburg.

A visual example of Bart van der Leek's empirical attitude is 'Ruiter/Horseman', 1918 which he produced as an indication of his dissatisfaction with the evolving philosophic basis of De Stijl.

The spiritual is expressed firstly in physical form, but also in other intermediate forms (which we do not see).

If one conceives these intermediate forms as increasingly simple and pure, commencing with the physical visible forms of appearance, then one passes through a world of forms ascending from reality to abstraction. In this manner one approaches spirit or purity itself. It follows from this that spirit is more easily approached by means of a form which is closer to spirit and indeed least of all by physical form. (28)

- (6) The fundamental difference between Mondrian's attitude and that of Bart van der Leek can be understood through the preceding quotation. I shall now try to develop the philosophic as well as the Theosophic context in which Mondrian had become increasingly involved by 1914, although it was not until he published a number of essays in De Stijl that he made direct public reference to several influential philosophers. But it cannot



be denied that his writings, although influenced by Theosophic tracts, such as those previously mentioned, have a close relationship to some of Plato's propositions; such as are to be found in the translations of Plato's 'Timaeus' and 'Critias'<sup>(29)</sup>.

We must in my opinion begin by distinguishing between that which always is and never becomes from that which is always becoming but never is. The one is apprehensible by intelligence with the aid of reasoning, being eternally the same, the other is the object of opinion and irrational sensation, coming to be and ceasing to be, but never fully real. In addition, everything that becomes or changes must do so owing to some cause; for nothing can come to be without a cause. Whenever, therefore, the maker of anything keeps his eye on the eternally unchanging and uses it as his pattern for the form and function of his product the result must be good; whenever he looks to something that has come to be, and uses a model that has come to be, the result is not good. (30)

The quotations that have been admitted from Mondrian's writings when compared with the preceding translated quotation from Plato's 'Timaeus', demonstrate the developing interrelationship that Mondrian's theories were gaining with some of the most important philosophic traditional concepts of Western European culture. But these traditions have their roots, in the teachings of the Egyptian philosopher priests<sup>(31)</sup>. This connection was shown by Edouard Schure in his book 'The great initiates'. Mondrian is known to have been deeply impressed by this book; having read it during the late 1890's and early 1900's. There are on the front pieces and title pages of both volumes the following quotations, which in the context of Mondrian's writings and the traditions out of which they evolved, can be included by way of further elucidating that context.

- (1) 'The soul is the key of the Universe.'
- (2) 'Know thyself, and thou wilt know the Universe and the Gods.'  
Inscription on the Temple of Delphi.
- (3) 'Evolution is the law of life.  
Number is the law of the Universe.  
Unity is the law of God.'

According to Schure both Pythagoras and Plato underwent initiation into, 'the primordial and universal basis of religious and philosophical truth'<sup>(32)</sup>.

Therefore from Mondrian's note books the following two quotations.

Every human being, every object, everything in this world had a reason to exist. Everything is beautiful, everything is good. Everything is necessary - all things and all men in their relative value of existence. Likewise all art is good. Everything finds itself in a certain stage of life at a certain time; the stage of life does not occur. (33)

And the second note:

...all religions have the same fundamental content; they differ only in form. The form is the external manifestation of this content, and is thus an indispensable vehicle for the expression of the primal principles. Through the form the primal principles operate in mankind. (34)

The Mondrian note concluded in this manner:

...form will be appropriate to a specific period of human development. Consequently form is dependent upon the period and upon the measure of man's development. This implies that form can never continuously remain the same. This also holds for form in art.

I think it can therefore be concluded that via his Theosophic readings and philosophic studies Mondrian's theoretical thoughts and subsequent propositions were like his painting completely inter-related to the traditions of that European philosophic stream of consciousness epitomised in the philosophy of Hegel.

(7) The outbreak of the First World War occurred whilst Mondrian was visiting the Netherlands to see his sick father during the summer of 1914, it was also as has been recorded earlier, the period of his exhibition at the Walrecht Gallerie in Den Haag. But it was not only Mondrian who returned home many of the Dutch artists didso because their country remained neutral and because others were called up to secure that neutrality along the borders. Theo van Doesburg was one such artist who was called up for purposes of defence, he was stationed along the Belgian-Dutch frontier. But the neutrality of the Netherlands assured her soldiers of a considerable amount of spare time. During his period of military service Van Doesburg's work as a painter ceased, whilst his activities as a writer increased<sup>(35)</sup>. He visited and reviewed a number of exhibitions during this period and in Amsterdam at the Stedelijk Museum he saw the exhibition Moderne Kunst in 1915. The contributors to this exhibition were Mondrian, Leo Gestel, Jan Sluyters, Loedwijk Schelfhout and Le Fauconnier, who spent the duration of the war in the Netherlands.



Van Doesburg was greatly impressed by the paintings of Mondrian that he saw in that exhibition and began to correspond with him; their first meeting was in January 1916, whilst Mondrian was living in the artists' colony centered around Laren in t'Gooi. At the end of 1915 Van Doesburg had proposed to Mondrian that they found a magazine devoted to the arts. Mondrian was sceptical about the proposal saying that it was too early<sup>(36)</sup>. During 1916 Bart van der Leek moved from The Hague, where he had been developing his work as well as working on some commissions for Mevrouw Kroller<sup>(37)</sup>, to Laren. During the same year Mondrian and Van Doesburg went to visit Van der Leek. In his tape-recorded essay Van der Leek remembered this meeting.

It was about the time that I was going about with a plan to found a periodical for painters, which would have urged architects on to hand the colour in buildings over to painters. And then came the day when Mondrian came to see me with Van Doesburg and I talked about my plan. Van Doesburg was all for it straight away and at once took the initiative. (38)

The previous quotation which referred to the founding of a magazine gives an indication of the difference of opinion that was rapidly to occur in the ranks of the initial De Stijl Artists. I think that it is therefore worthwhile considering Van der Leek's statements in a little more depth; for by so doing they will dialectically illustrate the importance of Universalist philosophy to De Stijl in its early years up until 1925.

By that time (1918), I had already found the unified form for the painting and the interior. By that time the breakthrough in generalized form and primary colour had already been made, and by that time again the foundations had in that way been laid for a movement which was to be applied by others impertinently and completely wrongly. Under the influence of my thesis that the colour image must be open and spatial the others began to join in, but not in any enduring way, since their work was not created out of insight. (39)

And later in the same essay, with reference to Mondrian's and Van Doesburg's visit, Van der Leek said,

On the day in question I had on my easel a canvas with large free areas of colour . . . . . and Mondrian was working on the 'large disc with vertical and horizontal', ('Compositie in zwart en wit 1917'), with free elements and fixed elements because he had been so struck by my work. And now comes the best bit of the story. Shortly after the death of Van Doesburg I received from someone a 'Nieuwe Rotterdammer Courant', with an interview between Brusse and Oud, in which it was said 'when Van Doesburg came back to Oud after his visit to the studio of Mondrian and Van der Leek, he said 'If that's what it's all got to



come to I'll hang myself'. " Both of these good fellows had arrived at openness in 1917, but neither of them had a real insight into it and so it did not last long.

In 1918 Mondrian went to Paris, saying simply 'I'm going away and I'm going to join everything together again, because people are saying that I am under your (Van der Leck's) influence and I don't want that.' Mondrian did establish himself in this way and in Paris he nonetheless very soon arrived at the interior, and when one now sees --- in America --- that he makes a cage of a closed grid with areas of colour enclosed in it at intervals, then it must surely be obvious that although he certainly wants to create a spatial whole, he lacks the real insight to be able to do so<sup>(40)</sup>.

The role of Van der Leck in the founding of De Stijl, from the evidence available, appears to have been a negative one, or more exactly a nonaligned role, for although he was deeply involved with social theories concerning the role of art, he was deeply concerned that art should be easily understood by all members of the public, thus it had to be general. Bart van der Leck said of his artistic 'quest', that it was 'for creating unity in the interior and the painting in generalized colour and form'<sup>(41)</sup>.

There were thus three major points upon which Van der Leck disagreed with Theo van Doesburg and Mondrian, the first was, as has been shown, concerned with fundamental philosophic meaning of Universal. The second was that he, Van der Leck, made a distinction between the role of the architect and the artist and he therefore disagreed about who should contribute to the proposed periodical. Where they, the founding painters of De Stijl, found general similarities was in their attitudes to the role of art in society and towards modern painting.

Thus from the negative and the naive forms of the old world we have arrived at an art form that affords insight if you like, a consciously human art form . . . . . from appearance to essence to humanity and the essential characteristics, that is the problem of the modern concept. In the last resort there is a deeper foundation than the purely emotional and that is being moved by the structure of the universe. (42)

And a few lines later in the same essay,  
... this form (of art), is like a completely dematerialized and transcendental form, which is built up out of a resurgent and extended realism, is of objective value and can remodel the whole of visual life into the



new form, which responds to the insight in objective, general values of form and colour. Relationship, equilibrium, structure, openness, with the background worked on remaining intact, whereby the architectural solution is applied in painting for the first time in plane and space, with and without representation. (43)

There are many similarities in the content of the above quotation and those ideas embodied in the writings of Van Doesburg and Mondrian. After the publication of two of Van der Leek's in De Stijl he refused to sign the manifesto of 1918 and proceeded to disassociate himself from De Stijl, signifying his withdrawal with his painting 'De ruiter'.

De Stijl had at its inception four painters, Theo van Doesburg, Piet Mondrian, Bart van der Leek and the much younger Vilmos Huszar, <sup>(44)</sup>. Its other co-founder was the architect J. J. P. Oud, who played an important part in the beginnings of the De Stijl movement. To begin with he was a practising architect, and had assimilated the influences of the most advanced and modern trends in architecture in the Netherlands. During this period and just prior to the First World War, Berlage was the foremost protagonist of the architectural movement in the Netherlands <sup>(45)</sup>. His, Berlage's attitude to architecture embraced many of the philosophic and socialist trends of the late nineteenth century, but above all his work embraced the idea of a building as a designed whole down to its finest detail. This, as a general concept, the integration of all the creative and craft factors into an integral whole, became fundamental to the De Stijl concept of an evolving man-made environment. But for the craft attitude, as epitomised by William Morris, De Stijl architects such as Oud substituted machine and factory technology.

The architecture of Berlage had qualities of monumentality and symbolism, that associate it with Art Nouveau and Jugend Stil, indeed Berlage was concerned to express through his monumental and decorative elements the emotional and subjectivist tendencies of the era at the turn of the twentieth century <sup>(46)</sup>. Against this aspect of Berlage's oeuvre the De Stijl movement, dialectically reacted. In terms of architecture this change first manifested itself in the buildings of Oud.

In the first year of the founding of De Stijl, 1917-18, it was joined by two more architects, Jan Wils and Robert van t'Hoff. Wils



worked in the studios of Berlage in Den Haag, whilst Van t'Hoff had visited the United States where he had seen and found the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright most stimulating and it was thus Van t'Hoff who brought a direct knowledge of Lloyd Wright's work to the De Stijl movement.

Berlage in the most general of manners embraced a number of the concepts with which De Stijl was to concern itself whilst also embracing other concepts against which they reacted, for Berlage's architecture truly expressed the 'Zeitgeist', of his time. It became clear therefore to the artists and architects of De Stijl that only dialectical reaction to what he represented could further the evolution of art, architecture and design. What they had to discard in both design and architecture was what Mondrian had consciously realised had to be discarded in painting, ornate elaboration and symbolist emotional decoration. Once these were discarded pure form could manifest itself and the Universal could become apprehensible in the objects created by man: in this way all men would live and could understand his spiritual being through it's opposite, the man-made environment.

In 1918 Gerrit Rietveld became a member of De Stijl<sup>(47)</sup>. He had worked with the influential designer Klaarhamer, his first contribution to De Stijl was made therefore in terms of furniture, which was his Red and Blue arm chair of 1918. This chair was of seminal importance to the development of the design side of De Stijl for it demonstrated with the utmost clarity the integrated creative movement that Mondrian and Theo van Doesburg envisaged. Between 1923 and 1924 Rietveld designed and built the Schroder residence at Utrecht. This house was, as his chair had been, the first completely pure manifestation of the structural spatial and colour principles postulated by the theoreticians of De Stijl. It was the true architectural expression of the concept of equilibrium expressed and demonstrated by Mondrian in his paintings and essays of the same period.

The reaction of the De Stijl artists was against a creative spirit that expressed secondary and individualistic attitudes, against those attitudes the founders of De Stijl took a moral stand one that was



analogous to the collectivist and the Iconoclastic stance of Calvinism. But combined with the influences of Calvinism was Romanticist Socialist standpoint. But it was not a socialism that manifested a political dogma, it was simply a Universal Socialism. It was therefore a Utopian concept being all embracing but humane. Its ethical and moral roots being firmly established in the Calvinist and humanitarian traditions of the Netherlands.

The aim of the De Stijl Group, as expressed through Mondrian's first essays in De Stijl, was the improvement of man's material well being thus enabling him to reach out towards a conscious realisation of his evolving spiritual life. Mondrian's and thus the De Stijl concept of spiritual life resided in the Concrete Pantheistic Universalism propounded by Mondrian in all of his writings and so far discussed in relationship to the content of his 'Two sketchbooks'. The holistic concept of society has its historic precedents in Plato's concept of an ideal society as expressed in his work 'The Republic'<sup>(48)</sup>. The De Stijl conception of society, although rooted in this ideological tradition, was not envisaged by Mondrian and Van Doesburg as a closed society.

If then Mondrian and the De Stijl artists were influenced by Hegelian and Platonic philosophy, and it has already been shown that these influences were present, then the philosophic path that Mondrian had to tread between the regressive and irrational forces in these influences had to be established with reasoned critical consciousness.

The De Stijl conception of rational attitude as the guiding principle of creative activity was vitally important to the evolution of Mondrian's and De Stijl philosophy. In the preceding chapter reference was made to Spinoza's concept of an active mind as against a passive mind, an analogy was drawn between this concept and the objective attitude that formed the basis of analytical Cubism. Mondrian's and indeed the Cubists' understanding of an active and rational attitude was though a relative one and should be thought of in this context, for with Mondrian's emphasis upon intuition the purity of his rationality could be challenged by the criteria of his Hegelian precedents. But the relative rationality of Mondrian's philosophy was concomitant with his conscious development of painting. This relative rationality was essential to the evolving



consciousness which appears so frequently in Mondrian's and other De Stijl essays.

The life of modern cultured man is gradually turning away from the natural: it is becoming more and more abstract as the natural (the external) becomes more and more 'automatic', we see life's interest centering more and more around the inward. The life of the truly modern man is directed neither toward the material for its own sake nor toward the predominantly emotional, it is rather the autonomous life of the spirit becoming conscious. Modern man - although a unity of body, and soul and mind - shows a changed consciousness: all expressions of life assume a different appearance, a more determinately abstract appearance.

Art too, as the product of a new duality in man, is now expressed as the product of cultivated outwardness and of a deeper, more conscious inwardness. As pure creation of the human mind, art is expressed as pure aesthetic creation, manifested in abstract form.

The truly modern artist consciously perceives the abstractness of the emotion of beauty: he consciously recognises aesthetic emotion as cosmic, universal. This conscious recognition results in an abstract creation, directs him toward the purely universal. (48)

The influence of Hegel which later manifested itself as Neo Hegelianism, became a dominant force in the philosophical, political and artistic climate of thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the Netherlands Hegel's philosophy was propagated by a number of philosophers including Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers and G. J. P. J. Bolland who taught at the University of Leiden<sup>(49)</sup>. For Hegel the Greek concept of harmony through a unity of the objective and the subjective became the major premise of his philosophic thought. The essential nature of this premise was of course the fundamental constituent part and the goal towards which Mondrian's art and his explanatory essays were directed.

Formerly one only perceived either the outward or the inward: the world was divided into the profane and so called believers. Modern man, however is capable of seeing the inward in equilibrium with the outward and conversely; through relationship he knows both opposites. Precisely in this way the truly modern man sees things as a whole and accepts life in its wholeness: nature and spirit, world and faith, art and religion, man and god as unity. (50)

And in the preceding paragraph Mondrian wrote:

By reducing the natural to the abstract in the plastic, modern man expresses the natural in all its fullness; for thus both inward and outward find plastic expression. Thus he shows himself to be truly modern man, who sees the outward as inward and penetrates the inward through the outward.



For Hegel life could only be considered as real if the subjective and the objective were in harmony. A concept that became essential to Mondrian's conscious evolution. For Hegel, the State became, as it had been for the Greeks and for Plato, the ultimate expression of Universal reality. Mondrian in his first essays in De Stijl gave exact expression to Hegel's notion of the conflict of individualism versus the Universal.

Art, then is the field of combat against the individual. In life, as in visible nature, there is a struggle between universal and individual; but in time the universal remains more closely bound to the individual in outward life than it does in abstract life, of which art is the plastic manifestation. (51)

Hegel recognised in Immanuel Kant's work a guiding principle that of the unity of opposition which took it's dynamic form as dialectic.<sup>(52)</sup> To this idea of thesis, antithesis and synthesis he gave clear expression. But in developing this aspect of his system he discovered that it had it's roots in Christian morality, for through the processes of negation and opposition the aspect of Christianity had it's roots in the philosophy of Plotinus. There are similarities between Plotinus' reconciliation with the spirit and Mondrian's theories, whose whole attitude to life was one of an optimistic belief in mankind.

'If abolition of the tragic is life's goal, it is illogical to reject Neo plasticism.'<sup>(53)</sup>

Yet abstract real painting shows that unity - difficult as it may be to realise in life - has to be sought through purification of the elements, nature and spirit.

Thus the new life can better equilibrate nature and spirit, and greater unity will become possible in the state, in society and in all of life's relationships. For this, it is only necessary that the new mentality develops freely: that it annihilates the old mentality and domination by the individual, natural (or female) element; that it frees itself of tradition and dogma and sees only pure relationships by seeing the elements purely. (54)

It must be noted that Plotinus proposed that knowledge of the Divine mind is to be gained by a study of one's own soul, a process in which the individual self must be negated, the body must be put aside which means of course the negation of physical impulses and desires, once this has been achieved, Plotinus asserted, the knowledge that can be gained is an image of the Divine intellect. Thus in Plotinus'

view, matter has no independent existence. This formed the basic premise of the pantheistic view of reality and the Divine proposed by Spinoza. But, as in Plato's theory of the Divine, Plotinus stated that the soul is not matter, nor the form of matter but that it was the essence and being such is eternal. For as Plato asserted ideas are eternal, the soul is an idea and thus it is eternal. The soul in creating matter, separates itself from the essence which in the metaphysic of Plotinus is the spirit or Nous.

Comparison of Mondrian's writings with the theories imbedded in the history of western metaphysical philosophy shows that Mondrian was concerned with the development of a style of art that clearly expressed this traceable theory of the Divine order, a theory that can be understood as being at the root of the civilization out of which his art evolved. The part that Theosophy played in the evolution of Mondrian's spiritual consciousness and particularly in the context of his religious understanding was important, for in his Theosophic studies he had found that at the roots all religions were the same, namely a human urge towards a knowledge and an understanding of the reason for existence. His theoretical writings were in their most essential form metaphysical philosophy rooted formerly in Western metaphysical philosophy and in their essence in the religious urges of all cultures. It was from this metaphysical, (Universalist) premise that Mondrian deduced the remainder of his descriptions of style and the social revision that he proposed.

'Only purified naturalness and purified spirituality can create pure relationships of opposites; only purified duality can make life enduringly harmonious. Thus human duality can evolve into unity.'<sup>(55)</sup>

And then three paragraphs later.

'All life has its outward manifestation through which it is known, and conversely, through which it exists. Abstract - real life finds abstract manifestation in Abstract Real painting, but has yet to find its palpable manifestation in life.'<sup>(56)</sup>

In the first of these quotations it will be noted that Mondrian gave emphasis to the theory of duality. Once again his use of this term needs to be examined within the intellectual context of his time. It is therefore



necessary to make further comparative reference to the work of Hegel, in whose philosophy the theory of duality played a prominent dialectical role. But it was from Immanuel Kant's clear exposition of this theory that Hegel developed and advanced his own theory of duality, as being necessarily integrated; as against the disunity of Cartesian theorists. In Hegel's philosophy the theory of dualism and thus the unity of opposites was not only applied to metaphysical thought but to any activity in which the intellect was concerned. The same is true of Mondrian's theories as will be demonstrated.

Neo plasticism most clearly shows that the abstract spirit takes both into account, nature and spirit: that the unity of the two is the ideal of those in whom the new mentality is developing.

The conception of unity implicit in the new mentality and stressed in Neo plasticism, is not understood by the masses - who fail to see nature in its totality. They fail to see the natural as the most outward manifestation of spirit, and nature. (57)

Thus the philosophic foundations that Mondrian proposed in his essays; published in the first issues of De Stijl can all be grouped under the one heading 'De Nieuwe Beelding in de Schilderkunst'; of which there were eleven published instalments; where therefore firmly rooted and formed a part of the evolution of knowledge in the mainstream of European thought. To the concept of the Universal Idea Mondrian attempted to give clear visual expression. The publication of his written essays was with the intention of disseminating the meaning of his universally metaphorical art to the public as a whole.

- (8) The plastic means of Mondrian's Universal theoretically based art, were searched for, evolved and developed from the very beginnings of Mondrian's period of landscape painting. The urge to formulate a conscious conceptual schema became one of the main issues of Mondrian's Cubist period, whilst previously it's presence had been concealed beneath other motivations, such as Mondrian's 'symbolist', experiments. The complexity of his attempt to bring this motivation into conscious form led him to employ the procedure of written notes as in his 'Two sketchbooks', and in his essays as well as his methodical visual exploratory experiments.

Living in Laren during the years in which Mondrian and Bart van der Leek were living there was Dr Schoenmaekers. He was a priest who



had become involved with philosophic and theosophic studies. His contribution to this area of study took its main form in two books, both of which had a profound effect upon Mondrian's theoretical propositions and upon Mondrian's theoretical propositions and upon Mondrian's use of plastic mathematics. The first of these works was published in 1915 under the title of 'Het nieuwe wereldbeeld'<sup>(58)</sup>, and his second book published a year later had the title 'Beginselen der beeldende wiskunde'<sup>(59)</sup>. Both of these books represented a philosophic system that had its precedents in Neo Platonic metaphysical philosophy and most directly in Hegel's system. Schoenmaekers was critical of Hegel's system, as has been clearly shown by the artist/theoretician Joost Baljeu<sup>(60)</sup>. Schoenmaekers criticised Hegel's pantheism, as a characteristic example of contemplative concrete pantheism, in contrast to his own 'visual concrete pantheism'. Schoenmaekers in identifying this difference wrote 'visual concrete pantheism' also acknowledges, consistently, the relationship of counterparts of creation and nature, but, in its elaboration does not commit the error of substituting opposites for counterparts. Baljeu described Schoenmaekers' concept as an attempt to propound the externality in nature as a visual plastic union of counterparts. For Schoenmaekers wrote in explanation of this concept, 'Contraries are always related to one another in a way that can be reduced to the ratio of active and passive (manhood) and (womanhood) for instance are contraries not oppositions.'<sup>(61)</sup>

Schoenmaekers' intention in asserting his concept of counterparts was an attempt to change or at least to give a different emphasis of meaning to Hegel's concept of the 'unity of opposites'. This divergence of meaning is important in the context of Mondrian's development in which, since the period 1912-14, the concept of opposites in harmonious balance had begun to play an ever increasing role, viz the 'Two sketch books', in both written and drawn form. Schoenmaekers' concept of counterparts embodied the notions of analogy and complementarity, whilst Hegel's theory of the unity of opposites embodied the notions of counter-action and antithesis. It can be seen that Mondrian was considerably influenced by Schoenmaekers' work but was at the same time critical in his acceptance of Schoenmaekers' entire system of universal thought.



In their early conversations Van Doesburg had persuaded Mondrian to prepare his notes as a series of essays which would be published in the first editions of the De Stijl magazine, rather than as a book which was Mondrian's original intention. Between 1915 and 1917 Mondrian struggled with the problems of developing his notes into essays. Schoenmaekers' books and his conversations with Mondrian and Van der Leek were important to Mondrian's theoretical development in a catalytic role, and as a direct source of information. For example the following quotation from Schoenmaekers' 'Het nieuwe wereldbeeld', could have been of considerable importance to Mondrian as a verbal formulation of what he was working with in the development of his paintings and was also attempting to give written form to in his essays. 'We now learn to translate reality in our imagination into constructions which can be controlled by reason, in order to recover these same constructions later in (given) natural reality, thus penetrating nature by means of plastic vision.'<sup>(62)</sup>

The first sentence of the above quotation describes precisely what it was that Mondrian had been involved in during his cubist experiments and with what he was struggling in his paintings and drawings during the years he met Schoenmaekers in Laren. The general proposition around which Schoenmaekers constructed the particular parts of his system was that reality could be understood through the process of positive mysticism. This concept embodied as a part of it's system, the visualization of insights gained, through the constructive use of plastic mathematics. 'We want to penetrate nature in such a way that the inner construction of reality is revealed to us.'<sup>(63)</sup>

Through the influence of Schoenmaekers and a reading of his books in addition to a study of Hegel's philosophy, Mondrian and Van Doesburg accepted the general premise of Hegel's speculative universalism as their philosophic doctrine. The difference of opinion that occurred was a reaction against what Hegel proposed as the logical evolution of his system. Art in Hegel's philosophy was placed on an ascending scale in a position beneath religion which was in turn placed beneath philosophy. The concept developed by Mondrian and thus De Stijl was analogous to that of Schoenmaekers who proposed the integration of all three activities

on the same level, which meant in their terms that all three activities had an equal role to play in humanity's evolution towards spiritual consciousness. The importance therefore of Schoenmaekers' emphasis upon the visualization of the Universal truths through the employment of plastic mathematics was an important factor in the development of the style that Mondrian and Van Doesburg were evolving as the style of De Stijl.

As was shown earlier the visual traditions of Dutch culture played an important part in Mondrian's evolution so they played a similar an important part in the decision making process that led to the emphasis upon realising speculative universalism in visual form. Hans Jaffé in his study of De Stijl gave considerable emphasis to the uniqueness of the Dutch culture and it's influence upon De Stijl. He cited precision, accuracy and calculation, as three important qualities of abstract thought. These three qualities are traceable in all aspects of Dutch life, both in it's concrete life of everyday environment and in the conceptual attitudes of it's cultural thought and matrices. There is in Dutch culture a collective tradition of clarity and precision: which manifests itself in the work of such painters as Vermeer, thinkers such as Spinoza and of course in the design of the utilitarian canal systems by which the country was claimed from the sea. To the enumeration of this collective tradition must be added the theological and visual simplicity of Calvinism.

The attitude to universal plastic expression that Schoenmaekers propounded in his two books can thus be seen as being completely consistent with the collective traditions of Dutch culture, whilst also expanding those traditions through the direct and dialectical influence of Hegelian speculative thought, which, as has been shown, had it's roots in the most historic traditions of learning and knowledge. Calvinist doctrine played a significant part in the philosophic formulations of both Mondrian and Van Doesburg. Although Mondrian reacted against the dominant influence of Calvinism adhered to by his father, the influence of Calvinism became a part of the philosophy of De Stijl through the dialectic process of evolution.



For what Mondrian and Van Doesburg were reacting against in the theories that supported and described their visual art, was what they saw as the consequence of the rise of individualism promoted by gross materialism. The collectivism of Calvinism was thus important to their intellectual development, and to the collective theories which became the motivating force of De Stijl. This collective spirit was of course not just confined to the matrices of some aspects of Dutch thought, it was the result of the upsurge of universalist philosophy that manifested itself in many forms across the breadth of Europe. Hans Jaffé described the collective attitude of De Stijl in the following manner. De Stijl's programme of collective striving towards a collective style, expressing collective thought, is perhaps the clearest manifestation of this trend. De Stijl's programme showed the other aspect of the period's attitude as well; for in demanding a collective style, it remained somewhat Utopian owing to the fact that it did not start out from the concrete principle of an existing collective, but from speculative and axiomatic inclinations. (64)

The adherence to a philosophy based upon universal principles rather than individualist principles stimulated De Stijl's collective attitude, if this had not been the result then the basic premises upon which De Stijl was built would have been unsound or inconsistent.

Schoenmaekers in his works identified mysticism with universalism and this is demonstrated in the following quotations, this aspect of his system is important, for Mondrian's attitude as revealed in his essays and early notes was inclined towards the same belief. In the quotations it can be seen that Schoenmaekers equated the modern urges of empirical science with nominalist ideology.

'The perception of the empiricist describes, the contemplation of the positive mystic characterises.'<sup>(65)</sup>

'We want to penetrate nature in such a way that the inner construction of reality is revealed to us.'<sup>(66 63 ditto)</sup>

The basic process of positive mysticism as propounded by Schoenmaekers and it can therefore be said, by Mondrian, was through visual contemplation: the aim of positive mysticism being to gain a knowledge and understanding of the immutable laws of absolute reality, through plastic mathematics, positive mysticism was given a style through which it could communicate these truths.

'Truth is; to reduce the relativity of natural facts to the absolute, 'in order to recover the absolute in natural facts. '(67)

In this sentence of Schoenmaekers', the word 'recover', is important in the context of the evolution, for theosophy asserted that man had during his physical evolution, lost his awareness of the absolute idea, which created and governed the entire Universe. The intention of Theosophy, as proposed by Madam Blavatsky in her works previously discussed, and in Schoenmaekers' work was to aid man in the 'recovery', of this awareness of the absolute, in a manner that would place all men in an active relationship with this collective evolving consciousness. 'Our human instinct for thought is an instinct, not to be suppressed, for the absolute and for recognition, a conscious or unconscious belief in the absolute, that has to manifest itself in nature. '(68)

Like Mondrian, Schoenmaekers never rejected nature as such, indeed and again in the same manner as Mondrian he had necessarily to believe in nature and by so believing had to attempt to give an explanation of it's causation and the nature of it's being.

'Nature, as lively and capricious as it may be in it's variations, fundamentally always functions with absolute regularity, that is to say in plastic regularity. '(69)

Sensible nature was for Mondrian and Schoenmaekers, as they both demonstrate through their writing, absolutely necessary as the effect of the cause, and without which the cause could not be apprehended; the cause being understood by both men to be,

'The unique creative force', which 'creates the surface of nature as it tends to manifest itself. '(70)

Positive mysticism coupled with it's means, plastic mathematics, as proposed first by Schoenmaekers and then by Mondrian, 'therefore rejects completely nature's direct appearance: but a mystical insight and certainly a positive mystical insight has even to describe a single fact as such as an illusion. '(71)

The intention of Schoenmaekers' positive mysticism was to provide man with the tools by which he would be able to become conscious of his spiritual existence. Having reached this consciousness to fully comprehend the workings and causes of the Universe. His aim was to provide a positive tool, the use of which would be a real aid to the process



of contemplation, his system can be understood as forming a part of historic traditions of theosophy. Schoenmaekers' system did not exist on the same plane as the systemic theories of empirical science. But Schoenmaekers and Mondrian both recognised the significance and the contribution that the empirical sciences were making to the evolution of humanity. This contribution they of course recognised was one of the main factors for the refutation of dogma that had for so long been employed by the institutions of the orthodox established churches to maintain the authoritarian practises associated with those dogmas. Coupled with the evolution of the empirical sciences was the philosophic movement that propounded the freedom of the individual. The subjectivism that developed from this movement and the objective developments of the empirical sciences resulted, towards the end of the nineteenth century, in man's disassociation from a knowledge of the collective nature of the spiritual and the sensible universe. As man's objective knowledge advanced so man's subjective and individualistic tendencies became more pronounced. Schoenmaekers', Mondrian's, Van Doesburg's and consequently the intentions of De Stijl were to reverse this trend. To reunite in consciousness matter, the soul and the spirit. To accomplish this aim required a system that could truly demonstrate the relational aspect of all things that exist within the Universe; one that would be consistent with the relational existence of all things, both in matter and in spirit. The two influential forces briefly described above represent an ideological climate dominated by the forces of individualism, subjectivism and materialism. Mondrian's theories were, with those of Schoenmaekers, dialectically established in an attempt to break this chain of man's development, to point to a life beyond the nihilism of Schopenhauer's philosophy. In a previous chapter it was shown how Schopenhauer's theoretical propositions were influential upon the rise of Symbolist painting and art generally. His theory of correspondencies was used as a description of the tendencies of that movement. Embodied in that theory was an extreme emphasis upon the self and thus upon expressionism. His philosophy stressed the idea of the will at the expense of reasoning. Mondrian in his essays clearly demonstrates his optimistic view of mankind and the role that art has to play in achieving this goal in for example the following passage.

Today the masses deplore the decay of art, while they nevertheless oppress it. The physical predominates or seeks to dominate their whole being: thus they oppose inevitable evolution - even while it is nevertheless accomplished.

In spite of all both art and reality around us show this precisely as the coming of a new life man's ultimate liberation. For although art is created by the flowering of our predominantly physical being (feeling) basically it is the pure plastic expression of harmony. A product of life's tragedy - due to the domination of the physical (the natural) in us and around us art expresses the still imperfect state of our innermost being. The latter (as intuition) tries to close the eternally unbridgeable gap that separates it from the material - as nature; it seeks to change disharmony to harmony. Arts freedom (allows) harmony to be realised, despite the fact that the physically dominated being cannot directly express or attain pure harmony. The evolution of art in fact consists in achieving the pure expression of harmony: outwardly, art appeared as an expression that (in time) reduced individual feeling. Thus art is both expression and the (involuntary) means of material evolution: of attaining equilibrium between nature and the non natural - between what is in us and what is around us. (72)

It can be seen that although both Schoenmaekers' and Mondrian's writings embody a relative concept of will: 'our human instinct for thought is an instinct, not to be suppressed, for the absolute and for recognition; a conscious or unconscious belief in the absolute, that has to manifest itself in nature.'<sup>(73)</sup> Their concept of will was one of infinite goodness.

That Schoenmaekers' major source of influence was Hegel has been shown and although there were some divergences between the manner in which Hegel and Schoenmaekers formulated their concepts and understood the logical evolution of the disciplines with which they were concerned. But in Schoenmaekers' work and in Mondrian's the direct influence of Hegel is apparent in the means by which the understanding of the unity of 'things' could be gained only through their reference to the spiritual or more precisely to the principle of self consciousness in a completely developed state.

The determinate is the positive for us, absolute, insofar as we can establish it objectively. We can speak objectively only of the determinate - which is universal, the universal. Subjectively we know diverse determinations, all of which are more or less individual. (74)

What will now be shown will be the formal principles that became the cornerstone of both Schoenmaekers' and Mondrian's conception and expression of the Universal Principles. These were the formal principles which gave them the ability to give concrete form to their intuitions and their resulting concepts.



Today the masses deplore the decay of art, while they nevertheless oppress it. The physical predominates or seeks to dominate their whole being: thus they oppose inevitable evolution - even while it is nevertheless accomplished.

In spite of all both art and reality around us show this precisely as the coming of a new life man's ultimate liberation. For although art is created by the flowering of our predominantly physical being (feeling) basically it is the pure plastic expression of harmony. A product of life's tragedy - due to the domination of the physical (the natural) in us and around us art expresses the still imperfect state of our innermost being. The latter (as intuition) tries to close the eternally unbridgeable gap that separates it from the material - as nature; it seeks to change disharmony to harmony. Arts freedom (allows) harmony to be realised, despite the fact that the physically dominated being cannot directly express or attain pure harmony. The evolution of art in fact consists in achieving the pure expression of harmony: outwardly, art appeared as an expression that (in time) reduced individual feeling. Thus art is both expression and the (involuntary) means of material evolution: of attaining equilibrium between nature and the non natural - between what is in us and what is around us. (72)

It can be seen that although both Schoenmaekers' and Mondrian's writings embody a relative concept of will: 'our human instinct for thought is an instinct, not to be suppressed, for the absolute and for recognition; a conscious or unconscious belief in the absolute, that has to manifest itself in nature.'<sup>(73)</sup> Their concept of will was one of infinite goodness.

That Schoenmaekers' major source of influence was Hegel has been shown and although there were some divergences between the manner in which Hegel and Schoenmaekers formulated their concepts and understood the logical evolution of the disciplines with which they were concerned. But in Schoenmaekers' work and in Mondrian's the direct influence of Hegel is apparent in the means by which the understanding of the unity of 'things' could be gained only through their reference to the spiritual or more precisely to the principle of self consciousness in a completely developed state.

The determinate is the positive for us, absolute, insofar as we can establish it objectively. We can speak objectively only of the determinate - which is universal, the universal. Subjectively we know diverse determinations, all of which are more or less individual. (74)

What will now be shown will be the formal principles that became the cornerstone of both Schoenmaekers' and Mondrian's conception and expression of the Universal Principles. These were the formal principles which gave them the ability to give concrete form to their intuitions and their

Mondrian's painting had at the time he first met Schoenmaekers reached; what I consider to have been; a critical point in his evolution. For at this point it appears that Mondrian's self conscious being had, as his notes and drawings show, become aware of the influence of determinant Universal Principles and Laws. In gaining this knowledge Mondrian also realised that it required an objectified system of expression, as stated earlier, one that was itself universal. Upon this most critical of problems Schoenmaekers' two books, which explained the reasons for plastic mathematics and the nature of plastic mathematics had a twofold effect upon Mondrian. In the first instance Schoenmaekers' positive mystical expositions must have verified the conclusions that Mondrian must have drawn from his sketchbooks and the resulting larger works, but in 1917 his work still retained certain individualist tendencies as can be seen in 'Composition with black and white 1917.

Contraries are different parts of the same reality. They are only real in relation to one another. The line is actually only in relation to the ray, and the ray is actually ray, only in relation to the line. So woman is only woman in relation to man; so man is only man in relation to woman. (75)

Although there was a partial difference between Schoenmaekers' concept of contraries and Hegel's concept of opposites, what they both stressed was the absolute necessity of the existence of each. Hegel asserted that without the phenomena the noumena would be merely an empty abstraction. Hegel was able to show that the opposition or antagonism of spirit and matter or nature was the manifestation of their unity. This same concept became one of the cornerstones of Mondrian's theoretical construct; indeed it was the harmony or equilibrium of this unity that he intended to express in his Neo plastic paintings. His basic means were the horizontal and the vertical line, the three pigmentary primaries and three non colours. In Schoenmaekers' books Mondrian found reference to these fundamental means.

The two fundamental, complete contraries which shape our earth and all that is of the earth are: the horizontal line of power, that is the course of the earth around the sun and the vertical, the profoundly spatial movement of rays that originates in the centre of the sun. (76)

This Schoenmaekers explained further,



The cross is above everything else a construction of nature's reality, vaguely suspected for some time, and finally becomes visible . . . . . The more he will meditate about the construction of the cross, the more exactly the mysticist will see reality as a created fact, beelding. (77)

Mondrian had, it should be noted here, already given private verbal expression to this plastic idea in his 'Two sketchbooks'. Schoenmaekers' effect was, therefore, to verify Mondrian's own formulations and also to provide him with the terminology with which to express these ideas in De Stijl. For example the term 'Beelden', used extensively by Mondrian as a description of the 'new art', he adopted from Schoenmaekers. The word 'beeld', translated from the Dutch means image or metaphor.

The figure, which objectivates the conception of a pair of absolute entities of the first order, is that of the absolute rectangular construction: the cross. It is the figure that represents ray and line, reduced to an absoluteness of the first order. (78)

And in the same book somewhat earlier Schoenmaekers wrote on the content of the two opposed lines in the following manner.

...movement in line is continuation, movement in the ray is vertical in essence. The horizontal and the vertical are not characterised by direction but by essence. The horizontal is characterised as a line: supple, receding, recumbent, continuous, passive line. The vertical is characterised by the ray: tight, hard, standing, rising, expanding and active ray. The relation of the line and the ray is the relation between the external and internal. It is a plastic relationship: the interior ray exteriorises into line: line is ray exteriorised. (79)

In one of his early essays published in De Stijl the very close relationship between Mondrian's and Schoenmaekers' theories, as indicated above, can be clearly seen. But in addition his essay gives a clear and concise description of Mondrian's own knowledge of his evolution as a painter.

Was it by chance that they were attracted to straightness, and - to the chagrin of habitual vision - dared to represent a wood simply by its vertical tree trunks? Was it surprising that, once they had abstracted these trunks to lines or planes, they spontaneously came to express the horizontal - hardly visible in nature - thus creating equilibrium with the vertical? Or, that in a rhythmic linear composition of the predominantly horizontal sea, they again expressed the - unseen - vertical in appropriate opposition? Did they do more than exaggerate what all painting had always done? Again, was it by chance that they were more deeply moved by the leafless tree with its strong articulation of line or plane than by the tree in leaf where relationship is blurred? And is it surprising that in the course of their work they abstracted natural appearance more and more, so as

to express relationship more and more explicitly? Was it finally, by chance, that after abstracting all that was capricious, they abstracted curvature completely, thus achieving the most constant determinate plastic expression of equilibrated relationship - composition in rectangular planes?

Art had to free its plastic expression of the indeterminate (the natural) in order to achieve pure plastic expression of the determinate. This was done by Neo plasticism, passing through Cubism. This is intuitively seen and felt by the sensitive observer: it becomes clear to him through logical thinking. It becomes convincing in practice, whenever one compares Neo plastic with other painting.

Comparison is the standard which every artist consciously or unconsciously uses: it shows him how to express this truth as determinately as possible. He compares each new work with a previous one, in his own production or in that of others; he compares it with nature as well as with art. To compare is to exercise one's vision of relationships; one is brought to see and compare basic oppositions: the individual and the universal. From a clearer and clearer perception of their relationship, a purer and purer mode of expression emerges. And so Neo plasticism logically arose. (80)

There is also evidence in Schoenmaekers' books that he subscribed to the same conception of colour as Mondrian, being based upon the primaries red, yellow and blue. In placing these primaries in the context of his contemplative mysticism Schoenmaekers reinforced Mondrian's and consequently the De Stijl concept of colour.

The three principal colours are essentially yellow, red and blue. They are the only colours existing yellow is the movement of the ray. Blue is the constructing colour of yellow, as a colour blue is the firmament, it is line horizontality. Red is the mating of yellow and blue. Yellow (radiates) blue (recedes) and red (floats). (81)

Schoenmaekers' conception of colour was of course very similar to Goethe's theory of the symbolism of colour considered earlier: indeed it was a theory completely integrated within the main stream of colour theories of European thought. Mondrian of course acknowledged the influence Schoenmaekers had upon his decisions concerning his adoption of primary colours, in the first volume of the De Stijl publications.

Reduction to primary colour leads to the visual internalization of the material, to a purer manifestation of light. The material, corporeality, (through its surfaces) causes us to see colourless sunlight as natural colour. Colour then arises from light as well as from the surface, the material. Thus natural colour is inwardness (light) in its most outward manifestation. Reducing natural colour to primary colour changes the



most outward manifestation of colour back to the most inward. If, of the three primary colours, yellow and blue are the most inward, if red (the union of blue and yellow - see Dr H. Schoenmaekers 'Het nieuwe wereldbeeld') is more outward; then a painting in yellow and blue alone would be more inward than one in the three primary colours. (82)

There is one further aspect of Schoenmakers' theories that needs to be considered; both in its relationship to Mondrian's theories and in the context of Hegelian and Neo Hegelian thought. I refer to Schoenmakers' concept of a Utopian Society. His, Schoenmakers', conception of society had evolved out of the basic premise of the unity of the spirit and matter. His works were written with the aim of improving the lot of man. He, like Mondrian and De Stijl in general, took an optimistic view of the evolution of mankind towards the achievement of consciousness. Like Mondrian, Schoenmakers believed that this state could be obtained through the destruction of man's particular aspirations and individuality through a process of self abnegation. The roots of this conception of a developed consciousness and thus a collective community spirit, were, as has been shown, deeply rooted in the mainstream of European thought and was given holistic form by Plato in his work 'The Republic'. It is in the final chapter of 'Het nieuwe wereldbeeld', entitled 'Wedergeboorte' - which means rebirth, regeneration, that Schoenmakers expressed his concept of a Utopian society. Dr Jaffe in his study of De Stijl used the following quotation as a summary of Schoenmakers' Utopian vision.

Our deliverance can only come through a plastic force. He knows that deliverance is nothing but the dying away of our particular individuality in order to be resurrected, to rise as the all embracing, the plastic personality, the all human in Godman. (83)

Hegel saw that total withdrawal into the individual self resulted in emptiness. He realised that the modern spirit of subjectivity accepted no authority but its own inner self. The consequence of this was that the individual rejected all external influences of teaching and experience. The resolution of this problem Hegel showed was not to find solace in its opposite but in the harmonious unity of the objective and the subjective, of the spirit and matter. Without the resolution of this problem through unity, emptiness would again result in the soul. In the unity of spirit and matter Hegel saw the solution for unity in the modern man. The



evolution and impact of Hegel's philosophic system can thus be seen to have had a fundamental influence upon Schoenmaekers' concept of a Utopian Society and consequently upon Mondrian's whole theoretical development: if partially indirectly through Schoenmaekers.

Evolution from the naturalistic to the abstract causes man to see nature differently; he may unconsciously reject the individual in nature, but this does not cause him to reject the natural.

Although he may destroy nature's most outward appearance in his plastic expression, it is still through nature that the universal becomes living in man.

Formerly one only perceived either the outward or the inward: the world was divided into the profane and the so-called believers. Modern man, however is capable of seeing the inward in equilibrium with the outward, and conversely through relationship he knows both opposites. Precisely in this way the truly modern man sees things as a whole and accepts life in its wholeness: nature and spirit, world and faith, art and religion - man and God as unity. (84)

The manner in which Hegel asserted that this unity of the self with the non-self, could be found was through renunciation, or as Schoenmaekers wrote 'the dying away of our particularized individuality in order to be resurrected'<sup>(85)</sup>. The evolving spiritual life must die to live, for it was Hegel asserted only the higher self which could exist with the non self. For as Schure had shown and Mondrian accepted: in his 'Two sketchbooks', - the concept of gaining unity with the spirit was at the root of all religion, self abnegation being the process of gaining this unity in all cases, and through Mondrian's influence this process became central to the philosophy of De Stijl.

If modern painting is generally permeated by an intensifying and accelerating quest for freedom from individuality - and (in Neo plasticism) is becoming a clear expression of the universal, then Neo plasticism is the plastic expression of the contemporary age - although it is in advance of its time.

Our age has reached the climax of individualism; the mature individual can now increasingly find equilibrium with the universal. When our mentality actually attains this equilibrium, it will also be clearly expressed in every aspect of outward life too, just as it is expressed abstractly in Neo plasticism.

Evolution from the naturalistic to the abstract causes man to see nature differently: he may unconsciously reject the individual in nature, but this does not cause him to reject the natural. (86)



Throughout this study of Mondrian's evolution attention has been continually drawn to the quality of dialecticism through which his work evolved. De Stijl, as a collective group, through the influence of Mondrian and Van Doesburg, completely accepted this evolutionary process. The philosophy of Mondrian and De Stijl was motivated by the aspect of Hegel's philosophy which sought for the true unity of the spirit and matter. For in the truth revealed by this unity there was beauty and beauty was the manifestation of truth. Mondrian was deeply involved with this concept of beauty and indeed quoted the Hegelian philosopher Bolland in this context<sup>(87)</sup>.

- (9) The first of Mondrian's essays to be published in De Stijl appeared in the first publication, it was the introduction to his major statement on Neo plasticism. There were in fact eleven parts to this essay, these parts contain the whole theoretical substance upon which De Stijl was founded. It was also from those sections that the majority of the preceding connections with the philosophic milieu of the time and its precedents were made and can be made.

In many of his published early essays Mondrian made continual reference to the evolving consciousness as one of the most significant factors in the artistic climate and intellectual milieu in which he lived. He made this statement in a general but two fold manner. By this I mean that his style of writing was depersonalized; this style continued until he wrote his last essay in New York, ('Towards the true vision of reality') which was stylistically autobiographical. In his previous essays, though, he did make obvious references to his own evolution, for example in his dialogue essays, 'Dialogo over de nieuwe beelding (zanger en schilder)'<sup>(88)</sup>. The reasons for this were no doubt based in Mondrian's determination to exclude as far as possible any overt individualistic qualities in his writing. His adopted style was therefore a unity of theoretical universal propositions and assertions structured upon an acute consciousness of his own individual evolution.

In the first paragraph of his first essay to be published in De Stijl, Mondrian wrote of man's changed consciousness.

Modern man - although a unity of body, soul and mind - shows a changed consciousness: all expressions of life assume a different appearance, a more determinately abstract appearance.



Art too, as the product of a new duality in man, is now expressed as the product of cultivated outwardness and of a deeper, more conscious inwardness. As pure creation of the human mind, art is expressed as pure aesthetic creation, manifested in abstract form. (89)

This quotation illustrates the point that preceded it, for it shows Mondrian's awareness of the climate of the context in which he lived, this he expresses overtly as it were in the third person, whilst beneath it, and acting as its structure, can be sensed his own evolving consciousness. Mondrian's optimism appears to be such that he equates his own consciousness with that of his fellow men. This sense of universal optimism he continued to develop throughout his essays, whilst at the same time indicating the way that this could be achieved and the role that the artist has to play in bringing this universal aim into complete being.

The truly modern artist consciously perceives the abstractness of the emotion of beauty: he consciously recognises aesthetic emotion as cosmic, universal. This conscious recognition results in an abstract creation, directs him toward the purely universal. (89) *ibid.*

The second phrase of the above sentence gives a clear indication of Mondrian's awareness of the causal energy of his consciousness, but, as he states, the effect of this cause was to assert aesthetic emotion as the cosmic and universal. Thus it can be seen in the opening sentences of his first published contribution to De Stijl that Mondrian set down two fundamental universal propositions, from those two the vast majority of his other propositions and assertions could be deduced. This he clearly demonstrated in the next paragraph of this introductory essay.

That is why the new art cannot be manifested as (naturalistic) concrete representation, which - even where universal vision is present - always points more or less to the particular, or in any case conceals the universal within it.

The new plastic cannot be cloaked by what is characteristic of the particular natural form and colour, but must be expressed by the abstraction of form and colour - by means of the straight line and the determinate primary colour. (90)

The process by which Mondrian arrived at the construction of this conception of man was through 'trial and error', for in his earlier paintings can be found examples which express both material for its own sake and the predominantly emotional in the individualistic mode.



The method that Mondrian used to develop his concept of unity was that of 'evolutionary dialecticism', this process he became first conscious of through his painting, it was reinforced and verified by his studies of philosophy. His knowledge of this process he then contributed to De Stijl. This he did by emphasising the need for plastic expression, which is truly a synthetic form of art. He recognised this process in his own evolution as being a manifold of the influences of the art of the past and his own activity as an artist.

Modern art follows ancient art in accentuating the planearity of natural reality; it is only a more consistent expression of the same idea: the plastic conception. After the accentuation of planearity there began the breaking up of visual corporeality of objects in painting (Cézanne, Kandinsky, and the Cubist school - Picasso). Here the plastic conception already becomes more structural Neo plasticism, finally, is the manifestation of this idea, the manifestation of the purely aesthetic idea.

In general, then, painting creates plastically by accentuating angularity. The plastic is necessary in painting because it creates space. Because painting expresses space on a flat surface it needs another plastic than the natural (which is not perceived on one plane). (91)

Having then clearly established his awareness of the precedents for his artistic activity Mondrian then elucidated the unified dualistic nature of Neo plasticism, this being the fundamental development in mankind that Mondrian hoped to communicate.

If Neo plasticism is dualistic through its composition, its composition also is dualistic. The composition expresses subjectivity, individuality, through its rhythm - which is formed by the relationships of colour and dimension, even though they are mutually opposed and neutralized; and it expresses the universal through its relationship of dimension and colour value by continuous opposition of the plastic means themselves.

It is precisely this duality of composition that makes abstract-real painting possible. (92)

The awareness that had evolved in Mondrian was a universal consciousness generally analogous to that propounded by Spinoza. The essence of this universal conception Mondrian found necessarily to be abstract, unknowable in sensible reality but intelligible through sensible reality. Therefore Mondrian's universalism must, if his theories of abstract real painting are to be understood be considered in terms of universal thought rather than within terms of the definition of universal used by nominalist thinkers. Once this differentiation has been accepted the deductions that Mondrian made from his fundamental



concepts and the rationality that Mondrian claimed for Neo plasticism can be accepted as valid within the terms of reference which are an inherent part of the theory.

Foremost to be stressed about Neo plasticism is its reasonableness. For the main question that modern man asks of anything is whether it is rational. He must see clearly the rationality of Neo plasticism as art in general, as well as its rationality as an art of our time.

If we define Neo plasticism as a plastically determinate aesthetic expression of the universal, or as a direct (aesthetic) expression of the universal through the subjective transformation of the universal (see introduction), then it satisfies the requirements of all art. (93)

Neo plastic art as proposed by Mondrian and demonstrated through his own painting was a metaphorical proposal. I think that it was significant that both Mondrian and Schoenmaekers chose to use the term 'beeld'(metaphor) rather than 'zinnebeeld', (symbol). The reason for the choice of this term instead of symbol, were presumably based in their intentions to propose forms of expression that were concerned with clearly communicating the content of man's new consciousness, that of his unified dualistic existence. The term 'symbol' in connection with art had in recent years become associated with the description of art that was overtly subjective, thus symbolism had publicly become known as a term describing only one aspect of man's dual existence. In addition it also had a vast descriptive history associated with ritualism, and in this respect could be thought of in some instances as a veil between the suppliant and universal reality.

The knowledge that Mondrian gained of the universal he obtained, as has been shown, through the process of 'evolutionary dialecticism'. He realised that the concept that he sought to know, could only be known through pure intuition which acted as the motivating force to the intellect. In his last essay Mondrian used a phrase, which has often been quoted in this study, to describe his essential motivating force, 'I was always a realist'. His process of abstraction and objectification began to take conscious form during his first period of landscape painting and study; realism, he found in these early years, resided in something deeper than the objects of his sensible understanding.



Once this initial stage had been reached, Mondrian discovered that he had, if only tenuously, located the direction in which all his subsequent work would be directed. The deeply rooted causes of this initial intuition reside, I think, in an area of Mondrian's being that could only be considered in terms of speculative and insubstantial psychoanalysis. It is enough to assert that early in his career Mondrian received an intuition that set the general direction of his subsequent evolution. The concept derived from this initial intuition he was then able to verify in relation to his developing knowledge and the climate of the times. At its root, the essential force of Mondrian's 'dialectical evolution' was intuition, and this he recognised and gave prominence to in his essays.

If unity is seen determinately if attention is focused purely on the universal, then particularity, individuality will disappear from the expression as painting has shown. Or when the individual no longer stands in the way can universality be purely manifested. Only then can universal consciousness (intuition) well spring of all arts - express itself directly; a purer art arises. However it does not arise before its time. The consciousness of an age determines the art expression reflects the age's awareness. Only that art is truly alive which gives expression to the contemporary - the future - consciousness. (94)

The above quotation coupled with the following two give an indication of what might have been a part of the content of Mondrian's first and fundamental intuition and his subsequent concept.

The universal in the artist causes him to see through the individuality that surrounds him, to see order free from individual expression. This order, however is veiled. The natural appearance of things has evolved more or less capriciously: although reality shows a certain order in its division and multiplicity, this order is not often asserted clearly, but is dominated by the conglomeration of forms and colours. (95)

Consistency of style in the manner of art is a product of dissatisfaction with the representation of natural form and colour. Naturalistic representation, from the viewpoint of the particular always remains inferior to actual appearance; from the viewpoint of the universal it is always individual. No art has ever been able to express the power and grandeur of nature by imitation: all true art has made the universal more dominant than it appears to the eye in nature. (96)

In the first of this group of three quotations there are three words that stand out as descriptive of the essence of Mondrian's conceptual standpoint, they were consciousness, universal and intuition. These three terms and the meaning which Mondrian attached to them places

them within the framework of metaphysical thought established by Spinoza in his work the 'Ethics'. For they are concerned with the same spirit of consciousness which Spinoza demonstrated throughout the 'Ethics', for example in the following axiom. '(4) The knowledge of the effect depends on the knowledge of the cause, and involves the same.' Or '(6). A true idea should agree with its ideal (ideatum) i. e. what it conceives.' (97)

Mondrian thus found that the process through which he could evolve towards consciousness was, through intuition and the rational process that resulted.

Spinoza in writing his work 'Ethics', subtitled it 'proved in geometrical order, - ordine geometrico demonstrata'. Chosen due to the purity of geometric method. In the books written by Schure, Blavatsky and later in this present century Brunes, the authors all made direct reference to the use of geometrical method by the ancients as the means by which the Universal reality has since those ancient times been revealed<sup>(98)</sup>. Schoenmaekers, as has been shown, wrote of geometrical metaphors in the same general manner as Plato and before him Pythagoras. But for Schoenmaekers, for Spinoza and through them for Mondrian geometric form could stand for itself rather than being veiled beneath imitative forms of sensible reality.

The figure, which objectivates the conception of a pair of absolute entities of the first order, is that of the absolute rectangular construction: the cross. It is the figure that represents ray and line, reduced to an absoluteness of the first order. (99)

In this tradition of metaphysical explanation Mondrian found, that the evolution of the culture within which he lived had reached a point in time where consciousness of the great truths could be given determinate metaphorical form as artistic expression. Once again it was in his first essay in De Stijl that he gave concise expression to this so important understanding.

After long culture, the consciousness has grown in painting that the abstract - the universal - can be clearly represented. Through the very culture of representation through form, we have come to see that the abstract - like the mathematical is actually expressed in and through all things, although not determinately; in other words: the new painting achieved of its own accord a determined plastic expression of the universal, which although veiled and hidden is revealed and through the natural appearance of things. Through painting itself,



the artist became conscious that the appearance of the universal - as the mathematical is the essence of all feelings of beauty as pure aesthetic expression - Neo plasticism, (the new metaphor of reality), is abstract - real because it stands between the absolute abstract and the natural or concrete real. It is not as abstract as thought - abstraction, and it is not as real as tangible reality. It is aesthetically living in plastic representation: the visual expression in which each opposite is transformed into the other.

Abstract - real painting can create in an aesthetic - mathematical way because it possesses an exact mathematical means of expression: colour carried to determination. (100)

Mondrian in showing that his evolution was the logical outcome of the evolution of art, recognised that Dr Schoenmaekers' absolute metaphysical metaphor: the cross, was not in fact admissible as the means of the 'nieuwe beelden'. It is in Mondrian's written rejection of this symbol that the distinction that he made between symbol and metaphor is to be found.

If we see this unity, then we see clearly the unity of Abstract - Real plastic with visible reality: then we see this plastic, not as an aimless array of colour - planes and lines, but as an equilibrated expression of man and nature, of inward and outward, in their deepest, their most beautiful and external significance. Ancient wisdom represented the fundamental inward - outward relationship by the cross. Neither this symbol, however nor any other symbol, can be the plastic means for Abstract - Real painting: the symbol constitutes a new limitation, on the one hand, and it is too absolute on the other. (101)

Once again the decision that Mondrian reached regarding the issue of the cross was a manifold one, for at the same time, or in fact just prior to the writing of these essays, he had been completing a series of works that I have termed Post Cubist. They were based on the 'Pier and ocean' drawings. This group of work culminated in 'Compositie in zwart en wit', 1917. The structural element that he used was the cross, the next step that he made was to discard the cross and to introduce coloured planes which though were still somewhat ambiguous in their spatial position.

The traditions of thought which have been indicated above, had asserted that man had an overwhelming urge to understand the cause of his being, the 'will', to know had led man to discovery that this form of knowledge could only be gained through intuition and rationality. For Mondrian, art as he understood it had always sought to give expression to the absolute, the universal; therefore as Hegel demonstrated

through the application of his logic: absolute knowledge had to be the result of a rational process. Thus art must be rational, a manifestation of rationality.

Although Neo plasticism in painting is revealed only through the actual work - the work of art needs no explanation in words - nevertheless much about Neo plasticism can be expressed directly in words and much can be made clear by reasoning.

Although the spontaneous expression of intuition that is realised in the work of art (i. e. its spiritual content) can be interpreted only by verbal art, there is also the word without art: reasoning logical explanation through which the rationality of an art can be shown. (102)

The consistent rationality referred to above, that which can be traced throughout the whole of Mondrian's oeuvre, can be said therefore to form, coupled with intuition, the essence of the evolutionary movement of his visual work. As the preceding quotation demonstrated Mondrian gave rational reasons for writing about art. His explanations of the metaphorical nature of Neo plasticism as against a symbolic meaning was a complex but carefully reasoned statement. The rationale of his argument he developed from the conscious recognition expressed in the following.

'Long before the new was manifested determinately in life and in art the logic philosophy had clearly stated an ancient truth being is manifested or known only by its opposite.' (103)

In the continuation of this section of his essay Mondrian wrote as a preface to his reasoned explanation of the Neo plastic means.

The truth contained in the law of opposites manifests itself in space and time: in time the inward (within man) grows through the outward (in space): in time the more outward conception of space grows into a more inward one; in time, opposite becomes known by opposite. (104)

Before dealing with Mondrian's exposition of the Neo plastic means I should like to refer the content of the above quotation to its philosophic precedents and therefore its context, for as has been shown Mondrian was very aware that 'the logic of philosophy', had manifested many truths long before artists had become conscious of them, indeed Mondrian was himself in the vanguard of the coming of this consciousness as a vital force in art.

In Theosophic teaching the role of intuition is given a prominent position, and the assertion of this force as taught by the Theosophists



had a considerable influence upon Mondrian's thinking, and his exposition of the role of intuition in art. But in the teaching of the Theosophists' intuition is given, or understood as being a mystical force having little connection with sensible reality. The view of intuition held by Mondrian, although it was not categorically stated, evolved out of the philosophic stream of intuitive consciousness developed by Kant and Hegel<sup>(105)</sup>.

There are indeed very many connections that can be made between the philosophic content contained in Kant's 'Critique of pure reason', and concepts contained in Mondrian's essays as there are between Hegel's and as was shown earlier, the pantheistic conception of Spinoza. The quantity of cross referencing that would be necessary to reveal all of these connections would be enormous and beyond the bounds of this study. What is though manifestly clear from the small number of connections that have been made is that the conceptual consciousness of Mondrian's theories which are contained in his first essays in De Stijl, evolved out of the mainstream of metaphysical philosophy as propounded by at least three of Europe's greatest modern philosophers. But in addition Mondrian's theories contain his plastic means, these had their origins in the most ancient traditions of man's search and urge for an expression of absolute universal knowledge. But the means that Mondrian conceived for objective and determinate expression were resolved in terms of the climate of consciousness that had evolved through the dialectical evolution of culture.

In order to understand Neo plasticism's exact plastic relationship, it is necessary to see the exact plastic or relationships as the (exteriorized) opposite of naturalistic plastic expression. This is possible because the inward, which is not visible in the plastic nevertheless takes form in it. (Thus a radius which is inward and not actually visible becomes a vertical line in the plastic).

Starting from the visible; space is expressed in Neo plasticism not by naturalistic plastic but by the (abstract) plastic or the plane; movement is expressed by movement and counter movement in one; naturalistic colour is expressed by plane, determined colour and the capriciously curved line by the straight line. Thus the relative finds plastic expression through the determined - a direct externalization of the absolute. Starting from the non visible, from the inward: expansion is expressed by a (new) space expression, rest, by equilibrated movement, light, by plane pure colour. Thus in Neo plasticism, the absolute is manifested through the relative (in composition and the universal plastic means). (106)

As a consequence of becoming conscious of the law of determinate relationships in art Mondrian found he had, as a sequel, become cognizant that the laws of proportion, rhythm and asymmetry could be deduced from the knowledge of the law of relationships and relativity; thus:

...in Neo plasticism the law of proportion leads the artist to realise properly the relationship of size and colour on the picture plane: purely and simply through universal plastic means and not by any pictorial device. Rhythm becomes determinate: natural rhythm is abolished.

Rhythm interiorized (through continuous abolition, through oppositions of position and size) has nothing of the repetition that characterises the particular; it is no longer sequence but plastic unity. Thus it renders more strongly cosmic rhythm which flows through all things.

Individuality typically manifests the law of repetition, which is nature's rhythm, a law characterised by symmetry. Symmetry or regularity emphasises the separateness of things: it therefore has no place in the plastic expression of the universal as universal.

Abstract-real plastic has to transform symmetry into equilibrium, which it does by continuous opposition of proportion and position; by plastically expressing relationship which change each opposite into the other. (107)

In expressing the universal through the use of universal means Mondrian believed that his work therefore expressed absolute truth and by so doing was beautiful, for like Spinoza, Mondrian believed that absolute beauty was absolute truth.

In his second essay published in De Stijl, Mondrian wrote on the subject of Neo plasticism as style: (De Stijl). Again his concept of style was deduced from his essential understanding of the universal concept. His proposition for style had evolved through his awareness of the contemporary epoch and the aim of art as a manifestation of the universal absolute.

The aim of art is to emphasise the absolute, this is the content - universal and individual of all style. The universal in a style makes the absolute visible through the individuality of that style. Because individuality of that style provides the mode and the degree in which the absolute is made visible, it shows the spiritual outlook of the time it makes a style appropriate to its period, and constitutes a style's vitality.

Individuality of style therefore cannot be separated from universality of style (we discuss style as a duality to gain a pure conception of its meaning).

Painting can express the absolute in two ways: determinately (in a way in which it does not appear in the external (world) or veiled in the form and natural colour, as it is expressed in nature. (108)



To express the universal in visual terms, Mondrian realised, required style, and as that which was to form the content was the absolute concept of man's knowledge, the style had to be deduced from the knowledge gained from the pure concept constructed from the a priori intuition of the absolute universal. The style that Mondrian evolved from this pure concept became the most overt expression of all that had remained veiled under the guise of naturalism in all his work prior to 1917-18. That was the year in which Mondrian's transition from Post Cubist abstraction to Neo plastic abstract-real art took place. Thus Mondrian could have understood what it was that the seventeenth century Dutch masters sought to depict through their use of contemporary imagery, and what it was that the Barbizon, Hague and Symbolist painters searched for. Theodore Rousseau had written in the previous century upon the same subjects as Mondrian, he asserted the universal.

Everything has its source in what is universal. Nature yields herself to those who trouble to explore her, but she demands an exclusive love. The works of art, we love only because they are derived from her. The rest are merely works of empty pedantry.

Our art is capable of achieving the expressive force we are seeking, through sincerity of portrayal, through exact truth to life, if you observe with all the religion in your heart you do not copy what you see with mathematical precision, you feel and you convey the real world which enfolds you in all its inevitability. (109)

The necessity of style through which to achieve his intention; Mondrian conceived of as fundamental to the evolution of Neo plasticism. Style as the necessary vehicle for the means of expression had long been acknowledged in the intellectual life of European thought as paramount. Goethe in his literary essays of 1798 wrote upon this subject and in the context of Mondrian's conception of style Goethe's three definitions, simple imitation, manner and style are relevant<sup>(110)</sup>.

It is therefore, possible, I suggest to describe Mondrian's evolution in terms of the three definitions posited by Goethe. From Mondrian's essay 'Neo plasticism as style', the following quotation will now be given so that the validity of the precedential concepts referred to above will become clear.

The art of painting - essentially one and unchangeable - has always manifested itself in very diverse expressions. The art expressions of the past - characterised by so many styles - differ only by reason

of time and place, but fundamentally they are one. However they may differ in appearance, all arose from a single source: the universal, the profound essence of all existence. Thus all historical styles have striven toward this single goal: to manifest the universal. Thus all style has a timeless content and a transitory appearance. The timeless (universal) content we call the universality of style, and its transitory appearance the characteristic or the individuality of style. The style in which individuality best serves the universal will be the greatest: the style in which universal content appears in the most determinate plastic expression will be the purest. (111)

Thus for Mondrian and consequently for De Stijl, he evolved a style that was consistent with its artistic and philosophic precedents, and was in its consistency a consequence of its own time and thus true to his own a priori conceptions. From this primary source Mondrian was able to deduce the remainder of his theoretical propositions, those concerning ethics, morality, architecture and the structure of society. The process of deduction that Mondrian employed was generally similar to that used by any collectivist theorist. For example the manner in which Plato deduced his theory of society from universal premises, as demonstrated in his 'Republic' and in adjusted form in his 'Philebus', stands as a precursor for Mondrian's conception of society.

By cultivating their capacity to experience the purely (abstract) plastic, vital plastic vision, the whole group can succeed in following a single path despite the differences in their lives.

Therefore unity is no longer an unattainable ideal in life and in art. In early times everyone followed the same path, for - in each cultural era - a single religion was dominant. Today the image of God no longer lies outside man: the mature universal individual emerges, who, perceiving the universal more determinately, is capable of pure plastic vision. Thus the new era will differ from the old by its conscious perception, which will spontaneously realise itself everywhere as universal.

Plastic vision is not limited to art: basically it penetrates all expressions of life. Thus the general unity of life is possible. (112)

The ethical propositions of Mondrian and De Stijl were deduced from the concept of equilibrated harmony of inwardness and outwardness, which in its turn was deduced from their subscription to the Universal concept and thereby the acknowledgement of its inherent concept of unity in duality.

Because equilibrium between nature and spirit can be realised in abstract real life, it can be the phase in which man will become himself. He will be equilibrated and completely human both in his own duality and



in relation to life around him. He perceives and experiences this life abstractly and is not tied to its limitation.

Abstract - real life of the truly modern man through whom the new mentality is expressed. Truly modern man consciously experiences the deeper meaning of individuality: he is the mature individual. Because he sees the individual as universal, he combats the individual as individual. Triumphant over outward individuality, he is thus the independent individual; the conscious self. (113)

The important distinction that can be drawn between Mondrian's conception of society and that proposed by Plato in his 'Republic' is that Mondrian's conception does not envisage a hierarchical structure, for he conceived of all individuals as reaching maturity as 'the individual as universal'. Mondrian's theory was not therefore one that would result in a materialistic state, such as that of the Roman Empire. But at the same time it was a theory which was deeply concerned with providing for man an environment, based upon the style which was evolving out of Mondrian's growing awareness of the import of the Universalist theory. It was then to be an environment through which man as an individual could find himself as the 'individual as universal'. Thus the environment must be constructed in such a way that man's basic physical needs were adequately and humanely catered for. Mondrian's theory was undogmatic in its application.

The embodiment of his view of ethics, past, present and possible in the future; he encapsulated in the final paragraphs of his essay 'New art - new life, the culture of pure relationships' <sup>(114)</sup>.

Every day anew we cannot be but startled at the total lack of true love, fraternity or friendship or goodness. Centuries have passed since the lofty message of the universal love was imposed. Without denying its influence, it is a fact that man has not changed.

Let us, therefore, not insist upon that which has proved unfit for realisation. Art has demonstrated that life is pushing mankind towards the status of equivalence of his two aspects and thus, towards the annihilation of the individual's limitations. It is in this way that life will arrive at the realisation of the grand ideals, once imposed.

As soon as New Life will be advancing, it is evident that a new morality will be founded. It is clear that it will be rooted in the new culture, which has been revealed by both life and art. During the culture of the pure relations it will be based on the status of culmination of this culture, i. e. on the mutual equivalent relations to which the New Life is gradually attaining.



The new morality is that of the social life, contrarious to the ethics of the past, which tended towards this aim, but actually did not protect anything, but the particular life, either of individual or collective. Whereas the ethics of the past were supported by the church and state, the new morality will be sustained by human society itself in abstract its object is international, universal justice. For whereas in spite of their essential content the old ethics actually supported the different particular forms - even the one at the cost of the other - the new morality is apt to realise the equivalent relation of the civilized world. (115)

Mondrian's contribution to De Stijl in terms of theory, was therefore absolutely fundamental. Initially it took the form of an essay in six chapters split into eleven sections for publication. These were published during the first year of De Stijl. Mondrian continued to publish his essays in De Stijl until 1925 when he resigned caused by Theo van Doesburg's introduction of Elementarism (116).

- (10) The cause of the split between Mondrian and De Stijl, or more exactly between Van Doesburg and Mondrian, began in 1923. De Stijl from its very inception had, with the exception of Bart van der Leek considered architecture to be completely integrated, at least in their general conception with the arts of painting and sculpture. Against this concept Van Doesburg began to react under the influence of his deepening involvement with architecture. In the years preceding the split Van Doesburg had become enmeshed in a head-on confrontation with the staff of the Bauhaus. This began as early as 1920-21 when Van Doesburg began to correspond with and to visit the Bauhaus staff. His initial attack was launched against the expressionist tendencies that he saw in the curriculum of the courses offered. Under Van Doesburg's influence the staff of the Bauhaus expressed a desire to move their courses towards the De Stijl sense of purity and consequently Van Doesburg became deeply committed to bringing this change about. His battle with the Bauhaus began seriously in 1921. Walter Gropius, the director of the Bauhaus, was considering the appointment of a number of professorial appointments and Van Doesburg as a representative of De Stijl was considered for one post. But the decision reached by Gropius was that Van Doesburg was far too extreme and theoretical in his outlook. During this period of conflict with Gropius Van Doesburg continued to attack the 'individual', qualities that were allowed to flourish at the Bauhaus. Upon this aspect Van Doesburg developed an



argument not only against certain members of the Bauhaus staff but also against Mondrian and his Neo plastic art. One of the reasons for Van Doesburg's attack upon Mondrian was motivated by his developing interest and identification with machine technology and the development of Functionalist attitudes to architecture, which was centered around Group G in Berlin. Van Doesburg's interest in functionalism also gave him grounds for attaching what he considered to be the craft attitudes of the Bauhaus and was really no more than an extension of the ideals of William Morris<sup>(117)</sup>.

The essays which were written during this period by Van Doesburg reiterated Mondrian's ideas whilst also revealing the changes that were beginning to take place in Van Doesburg's ideology. In his essay, for example, 'Towards collective constructivism', he wrote,

'Until now, the human creative domain and its constructive laws have never been studied in a scientific manner. (118)

The speculative method - a childrens disease - has arrested the healthy development of construction in accordance with universal and objective laws. (118)

The scientific methodology in which Van Doesburg was becoming interested was based in science that was divorced from any metaphysical expositions of the universe; for this sort of exposition involved speculation and as was revealed in the last sentence of the preceding quotation speculation had become an anathema to Van Doesburg. This essay and others like it coupled with Van Doesburg's verbal attacks were presumably the basis for Gropius' decision not to appoint Van Doesburg to the Bauhaus staff. But there is a paradoxical quality present in the essay from which the quotation was taken. For whilst positing the hypotheses that the 'era is hostile to every subjective speculation in art, science and technology and elsewhere', this was followed with the assertion, 'in order to construct the new, we need a methodology, which is to say an objective system'. But after making that assertion Van Doesburg presented little that was objective, for his argument concerning the 'relationship between qualities of objects', rested its case upon dogmatic assertion, rather than upon an objectively consistent attempt to refute the philosophic precedents that led him to make such an assertion. Nor in fact did he substantiate his opening remark, 'our era is hostile to every subjective speculation in art'.

In another essay entitled the 'End of art', <sup>(119)</sup> Van Doesburg continued his attack, the basis of this was in his attempt to exclude any traces of the individual from the result of creative actions. His knowledge of Hegel's philosophy must have proved a considerable force. For in Hegel's philosophy the unified role of the subjective and the objective played an important part in the theories he formulated of scientific consciousness. Van Doesburg, though, in the first essay that was quoted from, appeared, even, to be attempting to deny the speculative quality that was central to Hegel's theory and of course to Mondrian's whole theoretical standpoint.

For the sake of progress we must suppress the notion of 'art', as an aesthetic speculation. (ibid)

Art has poisoned our life, aesthetics has infected everyone (we are ourselves not excluded).

Today life is paramount. Modern life in general flatly rejects all tendencies towards isolation and ivory tower like exclusiveness. (120)

The development of true life is hampered by art, just as in the middle ages scientific development was limited by religion and its official representatives. The position which religion then took is now taken by art. (121)

Van Doesburg's involvement with architecture had isolated him from the development of his own painting, but towards the end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925 he began once more to consider the problems of painting. In accepting his hypotheses of an objective scientific standpoint he had to find a style through which this position could be expressed. His aim was that it would be consistent to the contemporary scientific concepts of time, those of gravity and of matter in motion: to cite a few examples. Van Doesburg therefore began to develop a form of painting that he termed 'Elementarism', through which he hoped to give expression to the dynamic. These works he entitled 'Counter compositions', these were an antithesis to Mondrian's 'Compositions', some of Van Doesburg's first experiments in this development took the same format as Mondrian's painting of 1918 Lozenge with grey lines'. The first work in which Mondrian swung the square canvas through forty five degrees, and then constructed his composition according to the Neo plastic principles of pictorial plastic construction. In the first paintings of his 'Counter composition' series Van Doesburg



employed the same constructional principles as those used by Mondrian in 1918. In 1925 Van Doesburg altered this method, he moved the canvas back to its ninety degree axis and swung the main constructional axis of the painting to forty five degrees. Thereby the opposition of ninety degrees was retained but in a secondary role. This Van Doesburg believed was the logical evolution from Neo plasticism, for 'Elementarism', was in his assertion, the pure manifestation of spirit through completely cerebral means. Through these means Van Doesburg considered that he had broken away from the staticness that he perceived in Mondrian's painting.

He wrote on this development in a number of essays, Baljeu in his study has carefully selected two of these to illustrate this aspect of Van Doesburg's development<sup>(122)</sup>, from which the following quotations have been selected so as to build up picture of the divergence of opinion that led to Mondrian's resignation.

Elementarism rejects the demands of pure statics which lead to sterility and to the laming of creative potentialities. In contrast to the Neo plastic manner of expression, which is restricted to two dimensions (the Plane), Elementarism acknowledges a form of plastic expression in four dimensions, the realm of space - time.

In opposition to the orthagonal style of plastic expression, which is homogeneous with natural construction. Elementarism postulates a heterogeneous, constructing unstable manner of plastic expression based upon planes oblique in relation to the static perpendicular axis of gravitation.

If Neo plasticism introduced new ways of eliminating the compositional centre, Elementarism completely renovates our optical impressions, does not permit the work of art to consist of a left and right half and radically destroys classical, optical frontalism in painting.

After Neo plasticism rejected symmetry because of its association with our external physical structure (and rightly so) it should have rejected the orthagonal because of its association with our physical organic structure as the exclusively practicable manner of expression. This is precisely what is being done by Elementarism, which, through the suppression of rigid statics, evokes in us a new spiritual emotion that goes with the new optics.

Elementarism is therefore the purest and most direct manner of expressing the human spirit, since it is found neither to left nor the right, to symmetry nor to statics and is based on neither the horizontal nor the vertical alone but is always revolting against and contrasting with nature. (123)

The inferences that can be drawn from Van Doesburg's writings, published after Mondrian had resigned from De Stijl, became, as can be seen in the above quotation, increasingly paradoxical. Elementarism was proposed as the most spiritual of arts, divorced from the influence of nature. Van Doesburg had become increasingly concerned with contemporary science, a science that was fundamentally concerned with refuting the old view of nature and in establishing new laws which described the being of nature and its becoming, this developing stream of contemporary knowledge admitted as Hegel demonstrated, a relative subjectivism and a relative relationship with nature, manifesting as unified duality. Van Doesburg in these latter writings still manifested universalist philosophy, especially that of spirit, whilst attempting to refute the universalist theory of equilibrium and duality.

'This thought process or this development of consciousness, is the sole reliable manifestation of polydimensional movement, (objective and subjective), belong equally to the type of notion Elementarism has abandoned.' (124)

The premise for this development in Van Doesburg's thought was influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson in conjunction with the contemporary scientific theory, with these tools Van Doesburg attempted to destroy the metaphysical predicates that Mondrian had posited in his essays published in De Stijl during its first seven years.

The concept of classical art based equally upon some duality. In painting it produces either representational or abstract composition. The human spirit, already deformed by the twin forces of symmetry and duality (feminine - masculine; space time and so forth), confounded the spiritual by using the natural. A confluence of primordial values ended in chronic decadence. (125)

This was of course a direct attack upon Mondrian and was directed against the main pillars of Mondrian's theories. Later though in the first of these essays Van Doesburg's conception became even more paradoxical in terms of the theories about which he was writing; viz.

Elementarism begins where philosophy and religion leave off. As spontaneous, vital manifestations of consciousness, the latter disciplines have become sterile and obsolete. Each individual consciousness requires intellectual instead of perceptual activity. The Elementarist flatly denies all objective activity; he knows that everything became, becomes and will become real through subjective recognition. (126)



In the continuation and conclusion of this essay Van Doesburg denied Mondrian's, absolute differences, stating that they were 'symbolic imaginary concepts', in their place he postulated that absolute reality as understood by Elementarism was absolute universal movement. Even the individual (I) was included in this notion. Van Doesburg attempted to substitute spirit entirely for matter. Mondrian's Neo plastic theory; Van Doesburg asserted: was neither one nor the other but hovered between the two; as a sort of abstract naturalness, it was 'homogeneous' whilst Elementarism was 'heterogeneous'.

Van Doesburg's attempted correction of Neo plastic principles took a manifold form aimed at the correction of both the visual means and the theoretical tenets. He launched the focus of his attack directly upon Mondrian's theories as posited in Mondrian's essay 'Natural reality and abstract reality'. The second essay that Mondrian wrote in dialogue form. In that essay Mondrian gave a clear exposition of his conception of duality<sup>(127)</sup>, and the principles of Neo plasticism.

In one of his last published essays Van Doesburg put forward his views upon the role of intuition. The essay was entitled 'From intuition to certitude'.(128).

1. Speculative and random methods in art have become obsolete. Intuition leads us to adventure and to dream.
2. Paintings cannot be realised through a juggling trick or by sleep walking. It was this type of decadence which forced us to arrive at that formidable guide: intuition.
3. That which today bestows a cultural value on painting is mathematical or, rather arithmetical control. Mathematics has represented not only the basis of all science but also the foundations of art during the great epochs.

Mathematics have of course always been understood as being the expression of the Universal, this has been so since the time of the Ancient Egyptians. But mathematics does not necessarily disassociate itself from intuition, for mathematical form in the universal sense employed by Plato; was the only expressive form through which universal cause could be intuited.

In addition to this general historical based reason for the compatibility of intuition and mathematics, the direct sources of Van Doesburg's influences; Schoenmaekers and Hegel both accepted the



role of intuition as being fundamental to the gaining of a consciousness of spiritual purity. There was also one other contemporary Dutch development that must have challenged Van Doesburg's conception of the negation of intuition: the challenge coming from the work of L. E. J. Brouwer whose mathematical intuitionism and philosophy was evolving during the same period that Mondrian and Van Doesburg were formulating the essential De Stijl theories. Brouwer's theory of mathematical intuition was based upon Immanuel Kant's a priori conception of time, to which reference was made earlier.

Although it was not until after Mondrian had resigned from De Stijl that Van Doesburg's Elementarist theories and visual expression of those theories, which culminated in the Aubette in Strasbourg, (1927-28), where they were given complete form. But his attacks upon Mondrian in his essay the 'End of art', in which he postulated a functionalist approach, and in 'Painting; from composition towards counter composition', clearly described Van Doesburg's concept of the oblique, as well as his conception of the real and concrete in art. As both essays and Van Doesburg's new paintings constituted a direct attack upon the fundamental elements of Mondrian's Neo plastic theory and upon his painting Mondrian resigned.

Mondrian though continued; as has often been shown; to write until the end of his life: elaborating through intuition and deduction his theories. The resulting essays he contributed to many important contemporary publications: for example the magazine published by the Cercle et Carré Group in Paris. Mondrian published two articles in that magazine <sup>(129)</sup>. In 1937 he contributed an important article to the publication 'Circle', discussed in the first chapter. The last essay that he published during his life was 'Towards the true vision of reality'. A number of other essays such as 'Liberation from oppression', were published posthumously.

In conclusion it can be said of Mondrian's writings that they evolved out of the nature of his artistic evolution: an evolution towards his own spiritual awareness; and that in the period from 1917 to 1925 Mondrian's philosophic contribution to De Stijl formed the theoretical foundation upon which De Stijl was built. Thus his role in that movement as a theoretician as well as its foremost painter was fundamentally seminal.



Footnotes - Chapter 3.

1. Piet Mondrian. Letter to Querido. Two Sketch Books Pb Meulenhoff  
1974. Pp-9-10
2. Ibid
3. Ibid.
4. De Stijl vols 1917-1925.
5. Op cit seen1, pp 9-10.
6. Ibid 5.
7. Ch 4 and 6.
8. Goethe . Farbenlehre . Pb 1810. Tr Rupprecht Mullhaei, Studio Vista 1971.
9. Ostwald. The colour primer. (Die Farbenfibel), pub in 1916. Tr 1931  
Faber Birren . Van Nostrand Reinhold 1969, pp 9, 10 and 11.
10. Loc cit see nos 5 and 6.
11. Two sketch books p 22.
12. Ibid p23.
13. Ibid p24.
14. Ibid p65.
15. Op cit see n 11, p68.
16. Ibid p66.
17. Madame H. P. Blavatsky. Isis Unveiled: vols 1 and 2. Pb The Theosophical  
Publishing House 1910, London and Benares. Fpb in New York 1877,  
p93.
18. Ibid p 94.
19. Madame H. P. Blavatsky. The Secret Doctrine. Pb The Theosophical  
Publishing Society London, New York and Madras 1893, pb in the  
Netherlands as De Geheime Leer in 1907/08. P 628.
20. Op cit see n 1, p70.
21. Op cit see n 17, frontspiece.
22. Op cit see n 1 p66.
23. Ibid pp64 and 65.
24. Ibid p 67.
25. Ibid.
26. Bart Van Der Leek compiles his autobiographical memoirs partly  
as a result of requests from Holland and elsewhere. Text spoken by

- Van der Leek and recorded on tape 7/6/57. From the catalogue Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam Nr  $\frac{1}{4}$ 04 1959. Rp in the catalogue Bart van der Leek 1876/1958, Rijks Museum Kroller Muller, tr Patricia Wardle and Ina Rike.
27. Bart van der Leek. The place of modern painting in architecture.  
De Stijl vol 1 no 2 pp 6-7. De Stijl . H. L. C. Jaffé, Thames and Hudson.  
Tr R. R. Symonds.
28. M. Seuphor. Piet Mondrian, Abrams New York , p13.
29. Plato. Timaeus and Critias. Tr Desmond Lee, pb 1914, rp 1917.  
Penguin Classics 1971.
30. Ibid Timaeus p 40.
31. Edouard Schure. Tr Fred Rothwell. B. A. William Rider and Son Ltd  
1913. Vol 2 [Pythagoras , Plato and Jesus, the last great initiate]
32. Ibid , Plato p 183 vol 2.
33. Op cit see n 11, p40.
34. Ibid p 59.
35. Theo van Doesburg. Joost Baljeu. Studio Vista 1974, p 20.
36. Ibid p 21.
37. Loc cit see n 26, p74-77.
38. Ibid p 75.
39. Ibid p 74.
40. Ibid p 75.
41. Ibid p 75.
42. Ibid p 72.
43. Op cit see n 27, p93.
44. Vilmos Huszar. De Stijl. The Dutch contribution to Modern Art.  
Prof Dr H. L. C. Jaffé. Alec Tiranti London.
45. H. P. Berlage, 1865 to 1934.
46. P. Singelenberg. H. P. Berlage:idea and style. Haentjens Dekker en  
Gumbert , Utrecht 1972.
47. Gerrit Thomas Reitveld 1888 to 1964, op cit 44.
48. Piet Mondrian. Neo Plasticism in painting. De Stijl vol 1 pp 2 to 6.  
De Stijl , Jaffé, Thames and Hudson p 36.
49. Ibid pp 71-72.
50. Piet Mondrian. De Stijl vol 1 no 9 pp 102-108. Ibid pp 78-79.



51. De Stijl no 10 1918 pp 121-124. Ibid p 79.
52. Immanuel Kant. Critique of pure reason. Tr Norman Kemp Smith.  
Fpb in 1929 by Macmillan rp in 1973. Second division , Transcendental  
Dialectic pp 297-415.
53. Op cit see n.49, p78.
54. Op cit see n 50, p79.
55. Piet Mondrian . De Stijl vol 11 no 11 pp 125-145. Op cit 48 p 81.
56. Ibid p 81.
57. Piet Mondrian. De Stijl vol 1 no 11 pp 125- 135. Op cit 48 p 82.
58. Dr M.H. J. Schoenmaekers. Het nieuwe wereldbeeld. Pb Dishoeck  
Bussum 1915.
59. Dr. M. H. J. Schoenmaekers. Beginnelen der beeldende wiskunde .  
Dishoeck Bussum 1916.
60. Op cit see n 35, pp 28-29.
61. Ibid pp 196-7. The translation of Schoenmaekers idea is to be found  
on pp 98-99. Op cit see n 44, p193
62. Op cit see n 44, p5.
63. Ibid p 82.
64. Op cit see n 44, p77.
65. Ibid p 97 Jaffé p 76.
66. Loc cit see n 63.
67. Ibid p 97 Jaffé p 77.
68. Ibid p 58, Jaffé p 78.
69. Ibid p 39 Jaffé p 88.
70. Ibid p 150 Jaffé p 85.
71. Ibid p 95 Jaffé p 75.
72. Piet Mondrian . The realization of Neo Plasticism in the distant future  
and in architecture today. De Stijl vol 5 no 3 pp 41- 47. no 5 pp 66-71.  
Jaffé Thames and Hudson pp163-171.
73. Loc cit see n 68, p78.
74. Piet Mondrian. The determinate and the indeterminate . Vol 11 no 2  
De Stijl Supplement , Ibid p 103.
75. Op cit see n 58, p56, Jaffé p96.
76. Op cit see n 58, p 102, Jaffé p 98.
77. Ibid p 106 , Jaffé p 100.

78. Op cit see n 59, p72, Jaffé p105.
79. Ibid pp 35-36. Jaffé p 104.
80. Piet Mondrian. De Stijl vol 11 no 2 p 19. Op cit 27 pp 106-7.
81. Op cit see n 58, p224, Jaffé p 107.
82. Piet Mondrian. De Stijl vol 1 no 3 pp 19-31. The new plastic as abstract real painting: the plastic means and composition.  
Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 55.
83. Op cit see n 58, p263, Jaffé p111.
84. Piet Mondrian. De Stijl vol 1 no 9 pp 102-108. From the natural to the abstract. From the indeterminate to the determinate.  
Op cit see n 27, p71.
85. Op cit see n 59
86. Op cit see n 89, p71.
87. Op cit see n 58, Jaffé Thames and Hudson p71.
88. Piet Mondrian. De Stijl vol 11 no 4 pp 37-39. Vol 11 no 5 pp 42 - 53.  
Jaffé Thames and Hudson pp 117-126.
89. Piet Mondrian. Neo Plasticism in painting. Op cit 27 p 36.
90. Ibid p 59.
91. Ibid 82 p 57.
92. Ibid p59.
93. Piet Mondrian. The rationality of Neo Plasticism. De Stijl vol 1 no 5 and vol 1 no 7 pp 73-77. Op cit see n 27 pp 60-68.
94. Op cit 48. see n 48. Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 39.
95. Piet Mondrian. Neo Plasticism as style. De Stijl vol 1 no 2 . pp 13-18.  
Op cit see n 27, p50.
96. Ibid p 51.
97. B. Spinoza. Ethics. 'First part concerning God' Tr Andrew Boyle  
Everymans Library revised ed 1959, p2.
98. Op cit see n 31 & T. Brunes The Secrets of Ancient Geometry and its uses, vols 1 and 2. Rhodos 1967.
99. Op cit see n 59, p72, Jaffé p 105.
100. Op cit see n 82, p54.
101. Ibid , Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 66.
102. Op cit see n 93. Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 60.
103. Ibid Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 65.
104. Ibid Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 67.



105. Op cit see n 52 p67.
106. Op cit see n 93. Jaffé Thames and Hudson p67.
107. Op cit see n 83. Jaffé Thames and Hudson p60.
108. Op cit see n 88-pp 13-18. Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 49.
109. Jean Bouret. The Barbizon School of 19 century French Landscape painting. Thames and Hudson 1973.
110. Goethe's Literary Essays. A selection arranged by J. E. Spingurn. Ungar 1921, rp 1964. (A) On truth and probability in works of art. pp 51-58. (B) Simple imitation of nature, manner and style; pp 59-65.
111. Op cit see n 95. Jaffé Thames and Hudson p40.
112. Ibid Jaffé Thames and Hudson pp 82-85.
113. Ibid Jaffé Thames and Hudson p 80.
114. Piet Mondrian . The new art -the new life (the culture of pure relationships). Tr Til Brugman. De Stijl, the Dutch contribution to Modern Art . H. L. C. Jaffe Alec Tiranti London.
115. Ibid
116. Piet Mondrian's written contribution to De Stijl see bibliography.
117. Op cit see n 35. The conflict with the Bauhaus, pp 39-44.
118. Theo van Doesburg and Van Eesteren. Towards collective construction. Paris 1932. De Stijl series X11 6-7 1924 pp 89-91. Ibid pp 147-148.
119. Theo van Doesburg. The end of art. De Stijl series X11 9 , 192-25. pp 135-6. Op cit see n35.
120. Ibid.
121. Theo van Doesburg. Elementarism another search for dynamics in painting. Op cit see n35.
122. Theo van Doesburg. (A)painting and plastic art : Elementarism. De Stijl series X111 78 1926/7. (B) Elementarism and its origins. De Stijl Aubette Issue series XV pp 87-89 1928, pp 20-25. Op cit see n 35.
123. Ibid (A) p 164.
124. Ibid (A) p 165.
125. Ibid (B) p 166.
126. Op cit see n 122 , p165.
127. M. Seuphor Piet Mondrian pp 303-352.

128. Theo van Doesburg. From Intuition to certitude. Pb in Realites

Nouvelles , 1947 no 1 p 3 , written in Paris 1930. Op cit 35 pp 185-186.

129. Piet Mondrian. 'Ne pas s'occuper de la forme'. Cercle et Carre

No 1 .Paris L'Art Realiste et l'art superealiste (La morphoplastique et la neoplastique). Cercle et Carre No 2 Paris 1930.



## Chapter 9. Conclusion.

- Subchapters:
- (1) Self consciousness and the embodiment of cosmic order.
  - (2) Mondrian's lifelong involvement with fundamental Theosophy.
  - (3) Mondrian's paintings from the mid twenties to the mid nineteen thirties.
  - (4) Neo plastic proportions and music.
  - (5) The influence of Mondrian both direct and indirect.
  - (6) Evolution and the relationship between the theory and the practice in Piet Mondrian's work.
  - (7) Footnotes.

Chapter 9

- (1) By 1925, the year of Mondrian's resignation from the De Stijl group he had firmly established the theoretical and compositional means of his remaining mature work. He had in addition had his whole evolved oeuvre attacked with malediction by Van Doesburg in an attempt to refute the Universal principles of Neo plasticism that Mondrian had formulated and which had formed the basis upon which De Stijl as a creative movement, aimed at reinvigorating society, had been built. Mondrian answered Van Doesburg's attack through resignation and in paint proving conclusively that the principles of Neo plasticism were sound and consistent with the precedents out of which they arose, whilst at the same time transcending what Van Doesburg referred to scathingly as the homogeneous staticness of Classical composition. Mondrian between 1925 and 1926 carried out a series of 'Lozenge', paintings with these he was able to provide visual evidence that the application of Neo plastic principles: being firstly the compositional development of the fundamental construct, the ninety degree cross made up of the horizontal line and the vertical ray: did not result in staticness because the dynamic was maintained through asymmetrical but harmonious composition. Secondly Mondrian proved that the principles could be employed upon a surface placed with its edges at forty five degrees to the compositional axis, and still remain consistent with the Neo plastic principles. This construct was the exact opposite of Van Doesburg's Elementarist heterogeneous counter compositions, such as 'Counter composition: XVI, 1925'.

If reference is made once again to the work termed in this study 'Untitled drawing', circa 1918, it will be seen that the forty five degree axial division is an absolutely integral determinate of the development of homogeneous proportions. For the initial introduction of the forty five degree linear divisions gives, as has been previously shown, squares or lozenges in an exact ratio of two to one to the basic square. The proportionate relationships of the parts that made up the composition of a painting such as 'Lozenge composition in a square with red, yellow



and blue 1925', Mondrian knew maintained a precise relationship of proportions brought about by the determinacy of the 'plastic mathematical', system that he had evolved. As has been shown, he had to evolve the system as a plastic one, for only in that way would the mathematical system out of which he evolved his own system be resolved into a unification of his will and his objective knowledge of the mathematical precedent. He had with this system created a personal but at the same time, Universal system: it was an adaptation of what is termed 'the twelve number system', of Ancient Egyptian Geometry. Mondrian's personal development of this system was to adapt it for use as an asymmetrical determinate of plastic composition. By so doing he was able to give to his works a greater sense of tension and yet harmony than that which he could have achieved simply by employing the obvious choices of compositional arrangement that are the property of unity between the subject and the object; the individual and the universal. Whilst the use of the system as a symmetrical compositional determinate remains mathematically predictable and thus relatively objective; being so it lacks the harmonious unity of subject and object.

The interest in this system of mathematics was not confined to Mondrian and Dr Schoenmaekers but was in fact a common subject for consideration amongst the whole Artistic Milieu of the Netherlands during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. The evidence for this can be found in an essay written by the architect H. J. M. Walenkamp, entitled 'Voor - Historische Wijsheid. Over de beteekenis en de aesthetische werking van het 12-tallig stelsel'. (Pre-historic wisdom. On the significance and the aesthetic working of the twelve number system.) The essay was written by Walenkamp in 1904<sup>(1)</sup>.

Such an essay is hardly surprising as the whole artistic milieu of the Netherlands was during this period permeated by the influence of esoteric religious cults and by the Symbolist movement; finding its visual embodiment in the paintings of Toorop and Thorn Prikker and in the architecture of Berlage, Lauweriks and of course Walenkamp. It was a movement that was philosophically based in the revisionism and the dialectical evolution of Romantic German philosophy and subsequent

Neo Hegelianism. The teachings of the esoteric and occult religious groups, such as the Theosophists and the Rosicrucians were affected by this movement in addition to the influence of eastern religious teachings.

Into this intellectual climate came the energy of other developments. In the arts the change that came about was embodied in the advent of Mondrian's cubist paintings of 1911 to 1915 and in the architecture of such groups as the Amsterdam School of Architecture. A group whose growing awareness of social conditions in the poor areas of Amsterdam led them to evolve a theoretical stance and architectural response to their perception of these conditions. The theoretical premises and thus their architecture embraced not only the physical rehabilitation of man but a rebirth of his spiritual values through the influence of the aesthetics of unification. This general philosophical premise was not the domain of the Amsterdam School of Architecture but was influential upon all the architectural groupings that were concerned and conscious of the need for a change in society.

The manifold influence of the Cubist emphasis upon a greater degree of objectivity in art, coupled with Mondrian's and Van Doesburg's knowledge and experience of their environment led them to take up the same general position as that assumed by the above mentioned architects. In keeping with the concept of cultural evolution they became conscious though of the need for a change in the stylistic premises of those earlier movements: for a purification and thus a greater sense of unity through visual clarity. Thereby the unity of the spirit and matter could be made clear to all men through their environmental experience.

This problem had been the central problem of the philosophers and thinkers at the inception of the Romantic period in circa 1770, (Der Sturm und Drang). This group of thinkers which included the philosopher Herder, reacted against the influence of the Enlightenment and the cogito of Descartes and propounded a movement of renewal and unification.

In Germany this movement manifested in another group called the Pietists. They reacted against the official forces of Lutheranism with all its dogmatism which stressed right beliefs and concern for established structures. Thus they criticised the structure of the state and



defended the right of the individual. The thinkers of this period realised that through such theosophists as Böhme and philosophers as Spinoza they had received from prehistory a view of the subject which asserted that man became most conscious when he came to an understanding and knowledge of the cosmic order. This conception had been propagated by Plato in his concept of the forms. The manner that man gained contact with cosmic order was through ideas and consequently reason. For the early Romantic thinkers, for Hegel and consequently for Dr Schoenmaekers and Mondrian, order as a basis for the human soul became a rational vision of the cosmic order of absolute being.(2).

In the light of this powerful spiritual evolutionary stream of consciousness such an intellectual milieu as that described in relation to the architect Walenkamp developed. The Ancients, those that were initiated, intended that the use of such a system as the twelve number system would embody into their art and architecture, if secretly, proportions and relationships of proportion that embodied man's understanding of cosmic order. What Mondrian achieved in devising his Neo plastic system was the complete synthesis of his own being with this tradition of metaphysical explanation. He must have realised consciously that the significance of this the achievement of unity was of essential importance to his own creative evolution and to the public role that he saw for art.

De Stijl therefore became a movement concerned with the development of a style based upon these fundamentals and forming a basis for painting, sculpture, architecture, design, typography and music. The aspects of Modern Art that came to be associated with De Stijl such as Dada were included owing to the multilevelled complexity of Van Doesburg's character rather than as homogeneous parts of the De Stijl Neo plastic style. Mondrian did though take a real interest in the movements that were in this way attached to De Stijl, as can be seen from his essay 'De Bruiteur Futuristes Italiens en het Nieuwe de Muziek',<sup>(3)</sup>. But his overriding interest remained single mindedly with the development and embodiment of Neo plastic principles in his own paintings and in all aspects of art.



(2)

Mondrian's interest in Theosophy is known to have continued until his death in New York in 1944, his membership card found among his few remaining personal possessions and built into an archive by Harry Holtzman is dated 1939. Mondrian's attitude to the Theosophic Society is though thought to have changed during the period of his transition, that is between 1909 when he first became a member and 1915/16 when he met Dr Schoenmaekers, who had made a deep study of Theosophy in it's historical purity and had found it necessary to term his conception of theosophy Christosophy. . For like Rudolf Steiner, Schoenmaekers had become disillusioned with developments that were taking place in the Theosophic Society itself. A third major Theosophist who influenced Mondrian's thinking and who also became disassociated from the Society was Krishnamurti , he had been brought from India where he was born, to England in 1911 by Annie Besant. She became the leader of the Theosophic Society after the death of Madam Blavatsky. Annie Besant intended that Krishnamurti would become the world leader of the movement and for this role he was educated and trained, but in 1929 he disbanded the organization. But amongst Mondrian's remaining possessions Harry Holtzman found works by Schoenmaekers, Steiner and Krishnamurti, as well as Mondrian's own scripts and a few other essays including an essay by Marinetti 'Les mots en Liberté', 1919, and one by Howard Hay M. D. which discusses diet. (4). No doubt this was considerable interest to Mondrian for on all but one day a week during his period in New York he prepared his own salt free food. On the other day he dined with friends. There was one further text by a Theosophic writer called Mabel Collins, her text was called 'Licht op het pad en karma', (5). These few remaining Theosophic texts are presumed to have been of considerable lifelong significance to Mondrian, for the many other works that he is known to have read he had disposed of.

Krishnamurti's teaching like that of Steiner and Schoenmaekers and indeed all pure Theosophic teaching was concerned with regenerating in man a spiritual rebirth or a renewal of spiritual consciousness. Krishnamurti gave absolute emphasis to man as an individual for he



The brief description given above of the schism that arose between the thinkers of the Romantic movement and the orthodox Lutherans and Philosophers of the Enlightenment is an analogous description of the schism that arose between Mondrian and his father. A schism brought about by Mondrian's reaction to the strict Calvinism and other conservative principles adhered to by his father whose attitudes were reinforced by the influence of Abraham Kuyper the contemporary authority upon Calvinism and Christian Democratic dogmatism.

Mondrian's conception of the individual, as embodied in his Neoplastic writings from 1917 to 1944 is important, for as has been shown he was intensely critical of the cult of individualism: that which sought to assert the individual as unique and thereby manifested this supposed uniqueness through works of art that celebrated the sensual aspects of the individual, such as that promoted by some sections of the Symbolist movement and later the Surrealists. Mondrian's conception of the individual was of a free but collectively responsible participant in the cosmic order of things, and a part in which the cosmic order was embodied. Freedom of choice and action he understood as being related to the determinates of the absolute spirit. As a painter Mondrian realised that his own freedom of choice and action was fundamentally related to the schemata of the horizontal line and the vertical ray. He recognised that his perceptual judgements were made in relation to the determinacy of this schemata and that his compositional judgements were arrived at from the same premises. In gaining his conscious understanding of this conception of determined freedom Mondrian must also have recognised that the fundamental schemata of horizontal and vertical with all its implications was universal to all men. Within the determinacy of this schematic conception it is likely that Mondrian recognised collective and individual freedom, but also that this universal freedom also implied universal and individual responsibilities. These two important implications Mondrian, through the channel of De Stijl publications and his own painting, propounded to the general public. Believing that what he propounded was the most concrete embodiment and visualization of this so ancient cosmological conception. That it was only through the process of cultural evolution that it had evolved into this concrete form in the twentieth century.

taught that only as a conscious individual could man find himself within himself. His idea was of an inward revolution, one that would bring peace and tranquility to the world. Love he asserted was necessary for a dynamic balance to be created within man, but this love could not be externally given by priests, philosophers or drugs, it could only be found in man as an individual being.

In the whole of Mondrian's written work similar ideas are to be found, for example the ideas in the following quotation emphasise this relationship. It was extracted from an unpublished essay entitled 'The necessity of a new art teaching', which Mondrian wrote in 1940<sup>(6)</sup>.

Our imperfectness creates the need for selfsatisfying. In different ways; material and moral life, work, religion, religious thought, sport, all is (are) seeking, trying. But we are from outside forced to do this or die. Innerly and outerly we are not free. And this is the cause why we cannot enjoy the feeling of vitality which is in us. This enjoyment needs freedom. But because of our imperfectness we have no freedom; thus cannot really live. The search for inner freedom will create freedom more and more. It is a joy to see revealed in art that freedom is creating itself.

I think that it is true to say that Mondrian found for himself the freedom that he believed was the right of all men. To this search, as many of his essays demonstrate, he linked the role of art as a positive force in man's search for individual inner freedom. Krishnamurti's simple but powerful writings were for Mondrian, it would appear, reinforcing agents to his evolving ideology and consciousness, rather than a direct influence. This same comment can be made with regard to all the Theosophic teachers who had an effect upon Mondrian's work, their writings reinforced and helped him to clarify his own ideas and experiences at various stages throughout his life. For example the notes that he made in his 'Two sketchbooks', between 1916 and 1917, were reinforced by Dr Schoenmaekers' ideas. By so doing Mondrian's theoretical foundation and style were prepared for his first essays and indeed all the subsequent essays that he wrote.

Mondrian's involvement with Theosophy in the pure sense of the term can be understood to have started in the mid to late 1890's and to have continued until his death in 1944. But he like, Rudolf Steiner, Krishnamurti and Dr Schoenmaekers, found that the purity of Theosophic



thought existed only in inner self awareness, through which the individual came to a conscious understanding of his relationship to the cosmic order.

- (3) During the period from 1925 to 1935 Mondrian was involved upon paintings that have been loosely categorized as classical; they have though been accurately grouped into ten different subjects, (see charts no. 1 and 2). Two of these groupings had in fact been commenced as early as 1921. The first of these 'Compositions with squares and small coloured planes', he continued with until 1929, the second 'Lozenges', until 1942. In fact until 1944 as his unfinished painting 'Victory Boogie Woogie', was composed upon the same lozenge format, but was also breaking new ground and therefore exists in a different subject group. Between 1925 and 1935 Mondrian appears to have completed about fifty eight paintings. It was a period during which his compositions became increasingly simple and refined. A painting such as 'Composition with blue and red', of 1927 illustrates the quality of refinement that Mondrian was able to achieve during this part of his life. The contrast of red set in a carefully proportioned rectangle he placed with the greatest attention to its position. The colour value is such that its area needed to be proportionately balanced against the pale area of the large white rectangle, this with the pale blue in the rectangle beneath the red rectangle. He achieved a greater degree of dynamic harmony in this painting by making the width of the vertical light blue rectangle slightly wider than the horizontal white rectangles at the top of the painting. In this way he avoided the problem of rectangular areas being perceived as frames or secondary areas. The dark blue area on the bottom left hand corner is important as it acts as a stop to the extension of the horizontal light blue area, thus giving visual tension to the edge of the canvas and thereby emphasising the concreteness of the work.

Mondrian's development of refined composition was accompanied by a reduction of his palette in the case of a number of his paintings to two colours, or non colours, black and white: and in 1933 to one colour and one non colour 'Lozenge with yellow lines'. This period of Mondrian's work is often termed, as stated earlier, his period of



classic composition. His experiments with paintings of this sort of refined visual simplicity continued into the last years of his life, but it took its most visually predominant form in the works up to 1935. During these years Mondrian interspersed these reductive compositions with works in which he introduced coloured rectangular areas, and lines of different widths as in 'Composition B with gray and yellow', 1932. But in the subject groups numbers forty seven and eight 'Compositions with multiplied lines and small coloured rectangles', and his 'last works', Mondrian returned to using lines of a single width-no doubt due to the developing complexity of these two groups of work,- which resulted in his two final paintings 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', and 'Victory Boogie Woogie'. The reductiveness which Mondrian had developed throughout the 1920's into the simple refined works of the first part of the 1930's gave way to increasing complexity and a re-introduction of many elements that he had previously used and set aside. But this evolving complexity did bring about the discarding of black as a linear colour and the introduction of red, yellow and blue lines: as has been previously discussed.

One section of Mondrian's work that is interesting to consider is his unfinished work, for on these canvases can be seen a part of the decision making processes that Mondrian employed in the resolution of his compositions. With the exclusion of 'Victory Boogie Woogie', Mondrian left behind in his studio eleven unfinished works when he died, as was shown in chapter two. These canvases as far as can be judged from their unfinished state would have been categorized into four of the subject groups used in this study had they reached completion. The earliest one dates back in its unfinished state to 1936. These canvases all demonstrate the plastic nature of the mathematics that Mondrian used to determine their developing structure. From the criteria of objective geometry they can hardly be termed geometric and there is no evidence upon them to suggest that Mondrian employed any other method than that of his own plastic system in their construction and thus in the resolution of any of his finished Neo plastic paintings.

With the exception of the two unfinished canvases 'New York City', numbers two and three<sup>(7)</sup>, all of these canvases reveal the charcoal lines that Mondrian used to resolve the basic structure of a work; upon



these basic structures he then applied paint sometimes reworking the structures or parts of it with charcoal again over the paint. Slowly and painstakingly the under work was eradicated and the work completed, which means that the painting was complete in its entirety. Not that the decision as to position had been resolved first, leaving the infilling of areas with paint to be completed. He built the composition up as a developing whole and it was not complete until the last paint on the frame had been completed. Even then it was not uncommon for Mondrian to rework a painting after it had been exhibited.

Coupled with these unfinished works are of course the working studies, which reinforce the concept of the plastic nature of Mondrian's whole oeuvre. A study such as 'Composition based on a diamond shape', 1916 made during Mondrian's transition from Post Cubist Abstraction into Neo plasticism has many very close similarities to the studies made for 'Broadway Boogie Woogie', and 'Victory Boogie Woogie', in 1943. In each case the process of notation which exists between Mondrian's a priori conception of the proposed composition and the beginnings of its physical realisation, where the process of composing became the unity of a priori conception and posteriori conceptions, are clearly revealed. Further examples of this aspect of Mondrian's working process can be found throughout his life's work: in 1921 he carried out 'Study for tableau 1', which reveals two plastic grids, one drawn over the other, in addition Mondrian used letters to designate rectangular areas with possible colour. This procedure of meticulous structural and compositional decision making owed its existence in Mondrian's working procedures to his early years of experiential study in landscape painting and his tenuous search for fundamental structure during that period. His discovery of the plastic principles Mondrian believed and asserted were the expression of the universal idea, being so they were the expression and symptoms of the new culture.

- (4) The De Stijl movement as its own self promotion acted as a Universal cultural force, Mondrian in considering and writing upon the implications of this assertion considered not only the evolution and development of De Stijl and Neo plasticism, but other cultural manifestations that were taking place during the same period. He wrote

for example upon the Italian Futurists and their conception of music; but more importantly he recognised the importance of Jazz as a contemporary expression of the symptoms of cultural change that were taking place in the occidental world of Europe and America. With Mondrian's interest in Jazz must be coupled his interest in the modern dance movements that became associated with the evolution of Jazz as a cultural phenomenon. In 1927 Mondrian wrote an article entitled 'Jazz en de Neo plastic', in that article he demonstrated how at a fundamental level his Neo plastic paintings and Jazz were both built up upon a system of universal proportions.

'The old culture is the culture of forms the new culture is the culture of universal proportions. Movement on every plane, Jazz and the Neo plastic are the symptoms of the new culture.'<sup>(8)</sup>

Jazz Mondrian understood as an expression of fundamental relationships in sound, Neo plasticism as an expression of fundamental relationships in vision. Dance became therefore for Mondrian a further process to be explored in these terms and he is known to have taken a great interest in attempting to give even greater fundamental expression to the movements of such modern dances as the Fox Trot and the Tango<sup>(9)</sup>.

Mondrian had during his enforced stay in the Netherlands during the period of the First World War, spent some time living with the musician and composer Jacob van Domselaar and his wife at Laren. Mondrian's evolving Neo plastic theories had a considerable effect upon Van Domselaar who attempted to use his understanding of the plastic principles for the resolution of the structure of his own musical compositions. As early as 1916 Van Domselaar published a sample of his 'Stijl', influenced music<sup>(10)</sup> Mondrian's Neo plastic influence upon music was though not only acknowledged in the Netherlands as an article published in Paris in about 1922 proves. It was written by William Seth and entitled 'La manifestation du Neo plasticism dans la musique et les bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens'<sup>(11)</sup>. Seth in his article wrote the following,

'The universal, for the new man is not a vague idea but a vibrant experiment in plasticism.'



(5) As early as 1909 with the advent of his exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam with C. R. H. Spoor and Jan Sluyters, Mondrian's influence as an artist began to be established, he had by the time that that exhibition took place been working seriously as an artist for twenty three years and was in fact thirty seven years old. He had during those years made an important contribution with a number of major landscape paintings, to the history of Dutch landscape painting. By 1909 his interest had centred around experiments with pointillist and symbolist painting and with their related ideologies. In addition he had begun to write and thus to give objective literary form to the conceptual structure of his work, as his letter to Querido demonstrates. During the following few years to 1911 Mondrian became recognised in the Netherlands as the most modern of Dutch painters. His move to Paris and his development of a form of Cubism, recognised by Apollinaire as being influenced by Picasso but essentially Mondrian's own, took place within two years of Mondrian's arrival in Paris. His sojourn in the Netherlands for about five years from 1914 to 1919, although a domestically difficult period for Mondrian, further enhanced his reputation, whilst at the same time stimulating a considerable amount of adverse and vitriolic criticism. His influence upon the founding of De Stijl during those years was it would appear more in the role of its most fundamental and seminal theoretician rather than as a publication organizer. The essays that were published in the first editions of De Stijl were dominated by Mondrian's postulation of the Neo plastic theory. Van Doesburg on the other hand had the necessary drive and ability to bring the De Stijl magazine into printed being and to maintain its publication through his own hard work and personal resources until the end of his life in 1931.

Mondrian's influence upon his contemporaries in the De Stijl group, at least the Dutch members, is hard to distinguish from Van Doesburg's, unless acknowledgement of his influence upon Van Doesburg's own painting is taken into account and there can be no doubt that Mondrian's influence upon Van Doesburg was very considerable. For as has been shown Van Doesburg's decision in 1917 to 1918 between the universalism of Mondrian, tentative as it was at that time, and

abstraction was decided in favour of Mondrian's conception of universality. During the early years of the De Stijl groups history there were certain indistinguishable features in the work of Mondrian and Van Doesburg. This similarity of course changed in 1925 when Van Doesburg put forward his Elementarist Counter Compositions.

In terms of a direct influence upon architecture Mondrian's influence was complicated, for unlike Van Doesburg he did not at first directly involve himself in this area, to begin with his influence had an indirect effect. J. J. P. Oud, one of the founder members of the De Stijl group, contributed to the first editions of De Stijl. But a consideration of his work will show, as he soon found that there were many points upon which his work as a practising city architect in Rotterdam was not entirely concordant with the doctrinaire stylistic ideology of De Stijl theory, he therefore withdrew from De Stijl, but his work still maintained many of the elements that came to be developed in a purified form by those architects who remained in De Stijl, and of course by Van Doesburg himself, and to a lesser extent by Mondrian with his stage designs and plan for a living room. The absolutism that is expressed in Mondrian's first De Stijl essays can therefore be said to have had the effect if only indirectly, of leading to Oud's withdrawal from De Stijl.

It is in what has come to be understood as the absolutism of De Stijl that one of the largest misunderstandings of Mondrian's theoretical propositions has arisen. The absolute elements imbedded in Mondrian's work and in his theories reside in the two fundamental elements of horizontal and vertical determinates and in the fundamental colours, the pigmentary primaries red, yellow and blue. These Mondrian had found to be fundamental to gaining an understanding of cosmic order, for understanding he believed must be embodied in ordered structure. He had also found that these two sets of fundamentals were essential to perceptual understanding, these for Mondrian were the only absolutes of understanding. What could be constructed from these absolute determinates could not be absolute but relative.

Charmion von Wiegand who became a close friend of Mondrian's during his New York period: described his contribution to the culture of the twentieth century in the following way<sup>(12)</sup>.



Mondrian's effort was to develop a new conceptual structure of the twentieth century which would be liberated, flexible and equilibrated, and it seems to me that he followed in the direct line of Cézanne, Picasso and Leger in inventing this new vision. He was not interested in anything romantic and considered himself a pure realist.

The relationship to the a priori determinates he recognised as fundamental, a relationship in which a harmonious, equilibrated composition in any media would at the same time be dynamic and that, coupled with it's sense of contemporary expression, was what he recognised in Jazz.

Mondrian's and the contemporary influence of De Stijl spread rapidly beyond the Netherlands and Paris where Mondrian was domiciled from 1919 to 1938 into other countries. The promotion of De Stijl abroad was of course brought about through the energy of Van Doesburg. Mondrian was however included in numerous exhibitions and his writings were published in German by the Bauhaus.

The aesthetic influence of Mondrian effected all areas of creative endeavour. Considerable emphasis has in many publications been given to the effect that he and De Stijl had upon the aesthetics of the International Style of Architecture. This style of architecture now dominates our urban landscape, it grew up out of the work of such architects as Walter Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Marcel Breuer and of course the impact of the developing technological advances in Europe and America, where the International Style has reached it's highest expression. But to accuse De Stijl and thereby Mondrian of influencing the aesthetics of the International Style is only partly correct, for it must be remembered that the architects of what developed into the International Style promoted the concept of functionalism. Mies van der Rohe as the leader of this movement in Berlin during the 1930s rejected aesthetic speculation, he promoted Functional Constructivism against the De Stijl conception of Universal Construction. Van Doesburg and Mondrian rejected the Functionalist aesthetic propagated by the Berlin Group G, they condemned them for their lack of understanding of the principles of unity of subject and object. The De Stijl criticism was not heeded and the results are all too obvious in our present environmental crisis.



One architect who without doubt worked throughout his life in the spirit of Mondrian's Neo plastic propositions was Gerrit Rietveld. He resolutely followed the potential of his original synthesis of Neo plastic ideas into furniture and then architecture. The buildings that Rietveld designed in the latter part of his life are a true manifestation of the way in which Mondrian's Neo plastic conceptions have evolved since their inception in the years between 1917 and 1920, thereby clearly demonstrating that Mondrian's Neo plastic principles are not statically dogmatic.

Having experienced the horror of the blitz in London during 1940 Mondrian left with the help of Harry Holtzman for the United States, where he arrived during October, taking up residence at 353 East 52nd street. Soon after his arrival he became associated with the group of artists called 'American Abstract Artists'. With them he exhibited his paintings and these were the first artists in America upon whom he had an influence. The group consisted of such artists as Harry Holtzman, Charmion von Wiegand, Fritz Glarner and Ilya Bolotowsky<sup>(13)</sup>. The interest of these artists was centred in geometric abstraction and although they were deeply influenced by Mondrian's theories and paintings, many of their paintings were not constructed according to the concrete principles of Mondrian's Neo plastic theory. Illusionistic space can often be seen in their work, for they were an offshoot of the Parisian Abstract Group, 'Abstract Creation', and the group called 'Circle', both of which Mondrian had associated with whilst in Paris and London. In these two groups were contributors whose attitude to abstraction was at considerable variance to the other members of the group.

Beyond Mondrian's initial and obvious influence upon the artists of American Geometric Abstraction, his influence can be traced in the much broader context of what has come to be known as the 'New York School'. The artists of this grouping, which manifested as abstract expressionism, went to great pains though to deny their origins and precedents for their work. A denial that they saw as necessary believing that to acknowledge a source of influence would be to deny the originality of their idea<sup>(14)</sup>. The New York artists objected to the determinism of Mondrian's theories and the style in which they



manifested. But they could not deny the impact of his concern for reality in a philosophic sense. Mondrian had during his Cubist and Post Cubist period taken one aspect of Impressionism, that of pictorial surface dispersal and developed it as one of the hallmarks of his particular form of Cubism: recognised by Apollinaire. He had therefore early on in the century arrived at the manifestation of the painting as a concrete entity. This aspect of abstraction was one of the bases upon which Abstract Expressionism was founded.

Mondrian's position was in terms of being an influence upon Abstract Expressionism and latter New York movements, that of representing a polarity, a part of the dialectical triad that the New York artists saw as the motivational force of their work, but of course went to considerable lengths not to acknowledge. In the work of Jackson Pollock the allover quality established by Mondrian in the years between 1912 and 1918 can be seen. Ad Reinhardt whilst objecting strongly to Mondrian's theories, posited theories that were every bit as deterministic and Barnett Newman reacted in such a way that he constructed a paradox which has since his initial assertion continued to disrupt the theories postulated by some New York artists. The paradox was Newman's proposition that his work was non-relational whilst Mondrian maintained that the essence of composition was in relationships, the parts to the parts and the parts to the whole. Newman in attempting to deny this idea created his paintings with what have been termed 'zips', but by so doing he related the surface to its edges - and the whole to its parts.

This non relational paradoxical theory has continued to be employed by artists of the Minimal movement such as Carl Andre and Donald Judd, where though the New York artists are 'non relational', as Barbara Rose has pointed out, <sup>(15)</sup> is in their acknowledgement of a 'lack of architectural, social and historical context for their work'. Which could account for why they have gone to such extreme ends to promote and have their work promoted internationally. The Utopian theories of Mondrian's art were the opposite of what the New York artists came to believe was the isolated position of the artist in a pluralistic society, one which in their view lacks any cohesion. But Mondrian's Utopian view of the role of art cannot be termed as the antithesis of a

plural society, for that would be to deny the very freedom that he found to exist in his conception of cosmic order and the Universe. A freedom, that was expressed by Reitveld. Mondrian posited an art form that was contemplative. He did not assert that beyond his art no one could progress, for that again would have been to deny his conception of the cultural evolutionary process. He saw his role as that of an artist in a humble and honest light who was searching to purify his own art so that in contemplation of his paintings the viewer would be confronted through his conscious understanding with what Mondrian believed were the determinates of reality, beyond those primary determinates the viewer was free to develop in his or her own way.

Where Marcel Duchamp posited his pessimistic pragmatic view of reality, Mondrian as the other major influential force upon the evolving 'New York School' of art posited a metaphysical and optimistic view of reality. From these two polarities many other aspects of the 'New York School', developed.

The painting considered earlier called 'Lozenge with grey lines', 1918, Mondrian executed simply with grey lines on a white ground: at the intersections of lines an optical vibration has been created, caused by the additive mixture of the two non colours and the geometric structure of the grid. Other works that manifest optical vibration occurred particularly during Mondrian's New York period, although he did not intend that these optical phenomena should predominate. His work became an important precedent for the movement in painting that grew up in Europe and the North and South American continents called in the vernacular of art reportage 'Op Art'. This movement of course owed a great debt to the painting and theories of Seurat but Mondrian's early twentieth century contribution of concrete painting was an important part of the evolutionary process out of which 'Op Art' evolved.

In the Netherlands Mondrian's influence can easily be traced. There are of course museums which have fine examples of his work, especially the Gemeente Museum in the Hague. The collection there of Mondrian's work forms the central part of that museum's collection of modern art, by so doing the museum and its collection has a very considerable cultural impact. The influence of Mondrian upon the present



day artist became powerful again during the 1960's when a group sprang up called Nul, which was closely linked with the Düsseldorf Group Zero. In the Netherlands the artists of the group Nul reacted against the predominance and the ideological credo of the Cobra Group, whose work was based upon expressionist principles and was led by such artists as Karel Appel, Corneille and Lucebert. This group was in fact an international group with members in Denmark, Belgium and the Netherlands. The work that the artist of Nul began to work upon was primarily based in the concept of art as a concrete entity which of course was first manifested and posited by Mondrian. One artist in the group Nul who appears to have been considerably influenced by Mondrian was Jan Schoonhoven. As his work evolved during the sixties it became increasingly more concrete and pure. Colour he more or less discarded in favour of the non colour white in which his reliefs are nearly always finished. Other artists upon whom Mondrian had an influence in the Netherlands are Peter Struycken and Ad Dekkers. All these artists began by working on objects that were wall dependent and manifested the concrete qualities of Mondrian's propositions, in recent years they have all extended their experiments logically into three dimensional objects, which exist in the same categories of sculpture as those made by such sculptors as Carel Visser and Andre Volten.

The Dutch people have in recent years developed a civic tradition of employing and funding artists to work in co-operation with the architects of civic projects. All of the artists mentioned in relation to Mondrian's influence have been involved in such schemes. In a number of instances they have achieved results in collaboration which exemplify the concept of a public role for the artist which form an important part of Mondrian's and the De Stijl theoretical stance. The work that they have made in response to these situations maintains though a stream of stylistic evolution in their constructional solutions, the sense of artistic freedom that is so important in Mondrian's work.

The direct and indirect influence: or more properly the dialectical influence of Mondrian has continued since his exhibition in the Stedelijk Museum in 1909 as an ever increasing force. Since his death in 1944



artists have found that the truth of the fundamental propositions of art that he posited in paint and in words is irrefutable. Where positive attempts at refutation have been made, such as that by Barnett Newman, the result has proved itself to be insubstantial. In the Netherlands where Mondrian's theory of pure concrete art has been carefully assimilated the results manifesting in the work of the artists mentioned above have been concomitant with their seminal precedent. Mondrian's influence will no doubt continue to flourish directly and dialectically, as it has in the thirty four years since his death because of the fundamental nature of his enormous contribution to the art of the twentieth century.

- (6) During the course of this study very considerable emphasis has been placed upon the evolutionary nature of Mondrian and his work. The concept of evolution that is pertinent to an understanding of Mondrian's is that which was propagated by Madam Blavatsky, Dr Schoenmaekers and indeed by Hegel in his more speculative propositions. The concept concerns itself with the evolution of the spirit towards what the Theosophists term the fourth plane of spiritual existence, what Hegel showed in his system to be an ascent of the spirit to understanding through, art, religion and finally philosophy. These two interpretations of the spiritual evolutionary process are traceable in Ancient history as the Theosophists demonstrate<sup>(16)</sup>. Those thinkers, which includes all the above mentioned ones, did not accept as entirely true the doctrine of evolution proposed by Darwin. Madam Blavatsky criticised the notion of ever flowing progress of matter and in fact the over emphasis upon the evolution of matter at the expense of spirit. She saw spiritual evolution as the only ongoing evolutionary force, whilst matter was discarded and became extinct through the cyclic nature of it's development<sup>(17)</sup>.

An analogy can here be constructed between Mondrian's work and the cyclic notion embedded in this evolutionary theory and it can be made visible by reference to the two graphs that have been constructed in response to this problem. It can be seen that subjects such as the sea, or the object of the sea, or the object of a lighthouse, played a major role in the evolutionary transition of Mondrian's work



from Cubist Abstraction to Neo plasticism. What existed after the transition was complete were the essential elements of experience that Mondrian went through when he lighted upon the objectiveness of the sea and lighthouses as vehicles for spiritual progress. The essential elements that continued to exist formed a part of the reaffirmation of Mondrian's spiritual knowledge. His life was spent in the development of conscious understanding of spiritual evolution, he gave to this universal concept his own interpretation as an artist, as Madam Blavatsky, Hegel and Dr Schoenmaekers had done according to the nature of their own wills.

Of great significance in the concept of evolution is the notion of relationship: that one exists in a universe related to every other thing, both 'noumenal and phenomenal'. This concept militates against the pessimistic or self defining view of man which posits a vision of the universe as empty of essential meaning; a universe that can only be understood through uncertain correlations discovered through perception, thereby denying all a priori existence.

The relationship between Mondrian's theoretical knowledge, beliefs and his painting was one of complete unity analogous to the religious convictions that motivated the young Hegel and other contributors to the Romantic movement. Mondrian in this unified relationship drew no distinctions between subject and object, between body and soul. Reason he believed was not divorced from feeling and will. His life's work was dedicated to giving expression to this understanding and belief, to realising in paint, in the most concrete plastic form he could achieve, the expression of this Ideal. The content of this Ideal conformed to the Universal Idea, but was-and this is extremely important to an understanding of Mondrian,- internally generated. For without this complete interaction, this unity, he knew that his work would be a distortion of the principles out of which it grew. It had to be plastic in Mondrian's meaning of the term. The determinant qualities that can be found in his theories and which are expressed in his paintings are not therefore restrictive or even prescriptive in the dogmatic sense, they are a necessary part of his expressive 'Stijl'. Certainly it can be said that Mondrian formed

a part of the Romantic movement, in that the aim of his work was to give expression to the unity of the subjective and objective. But his position in that movement, like that of Hegel, cannot be equated with the loosely defined ambience that has been attached to the whole movement of romanticism. To do so is to disregard the evolutionary dialectical nature of the spirit out of which Mondrian evolved his unified expressivist 'Stijl'. His contribution to the art of this century, but more importantly to the whole evolutionary history of art was unique being truly universal. His theories in the light of more contemporary ideas often appear old fashioned and even irrelevant. But the general fundamental formal and moral propositions that he posited, both in paint and in words, still contain an essential content that is significant to our present cultural milieu, because of the refinement of Mondrian's creative and moral consciousness.



Footnotes - Chapter 9.

1. H. J. M. Walenkamp. Voor historische wijsheid. Over beteekenis en de aesthetische werking van het 12-tallig stelsel. Nederlandse Architectuur 1893-1918. Pb by The Architectural Museum Amsterdam in 1975, pp 62-64. It has also been by P. Singelenberg in his study of the architect H. P. Berlage: idea and style; Haentjens Dekker en Gumbert, Utrecht, 1972; that Mondrian could have been influenced towards the use of a square as a lozenge by Gottfried Semper, who wrote on the subject in his plan for an ideal Museum in 1852. Semper also wrote a treatise called 'Der Stil in den technischen und tektonischen kunst en order praktische aesthetik'. (1860-63. ). Singelenberg Index p 272.
2. Charles Taylor . Hegel. Cambridge University Press 1975. Where he discusses this subject at considerable length.
3. De Stijl vol4 no s 8 and 9 1921, pp114-117.
4. William Howard Hay. The Medical Millenium. Pb in 1933 by the Pittsburgh Health Club . Holtzman Archive.
5. Mabel Collins. Licht op het pad , en karma. Theosophical Publishing Amsterdam 1913. Holtzman Archive.
6. Piet Mondrian. The necessity of a new art teaching. New York unpublished , Holtzman Archive.
7. M. Seuphor Piet Mondrian p 395.
8. Piet Mondrian. Jazz en de Neo Plastiek. Internationale Reveu 1/12 Amsterdam 1927. Holtzman Archive.
9. Nelly van Doesburg . Some memories of Mondrian. Piet Mondrian 1872-1944 Centenial Exhibition Guggenheim Museum New York , pp 67-73.
10. Jacob van Domselaar. Proeve van stijlkunst no 8 (1916) no 14 (16 Sept 1916) Bijlage van het journaal van den nieuwen Kring. Holtzman Archive.
11. William Seth. La manifestation du Neo Plasticisme dans la musique et les Bruiteurs Futuristes Italiens. La vie des lettres et des arts. Paris 1922. Holtzman Archive.
12. Margit Rowell. Interview with Charmion von Wiegand. June 20 1971.

13. Robert Welsh. The growing influence of Piet Mondrian.

Arts Canada XX111 1966 pp 44-49

14. Barbara Rose . Mondrian in New York. Art Forum Dec 1971, pp54-63.

15. Ibid.

16. Madame H. P. Blavatsky The Secret Doctrine Theosophical

Publishing House 1893, pp 256-263 vol 2.

17. Ibid vol 1 p 634.



Piet Mondrian: 1872-1944

Chronological outline.

## Chronology

1872. Pieter Cornelis Mondrian was born on March 17th in Amersfort Utrecht, the Netherlands. He was the second child and eldest son of Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan (1839-1915), who was at that time headmaster of the Calvinist Primary School in Amersfort. (The school and the family residence was at Kort Gracht 11.) Pieter Cornelis Mondriaan snr. had married Johanna Christina de Kok (1839-1905) in 1869 in The Hague (see map).

1880. At the age of eight Piet Mondrian's father moved the family to Winterswijk (see map) in Gelderland near the West German border. Mondriaan snr. took up the post of headmaster of the Calvinist Primary School where Mondrian jnr. received his schooling.

1886. Mondrian completed his schooling and commenced a period of self-training for a career as an artist, receiving guidance from his father, a skilful amateur draughtsman, and his uncle, Frits Mondriaan, a member of the, 'Hague School', who occasionally visited Winterswijk.

1889. In October he gained his state qualification to teach drawing in primary school.

1892. Mondrian passed the state examination enabling him to teach drawing in secondary school. He also studied with the Dutch Romantic Realist painter Jon Braet van Ueberfeldt, who was then a resident in Doetinchem Gelderland (see map).

In November of this year Mondrian moved himself to Amsterdam (see map) where he entered the Academy of Fine Arts. The first two years of the drawing instruction he was passed through, owing to his two previous mentioned state qualifications. He became a member of Kuntsliefde Utrecht until 1910. Exhibited still life 'Jug and onions' at Kuntsliefde Utrecht. First known criticism of his work. Utrechtsche Prov and Stedelijk. Dagblad 27 April 1892.



1894. Took evening courses in drawing at the Academy of Fine Art. Joined Arti et Amicitia in Amsterdam, remained a member until 1910/11 and also joined St. Lucas, Amsterdam, remained a member until 1910.
1895. Working on the subject of landscape.
1896. Re-entered the Academy of Fine Art in October of this year for a second year of evening classes in drawing.
1897. Mondrian's first exhibition with Arti.
1899. During this year he exhibited for the first time with St. Lucas. He also met A.P. van den Briel; who later became a forestry engineer, both men remaining life-long friends.
1900. Met and became a friend of the painter Simon Maris (1873-1935), son of the Hague School painter Willem Maris (1844-1910).
1901. Mondrian passed the preliminary examination for the Dutch Prix de Rome. He was not allowed to take the final part owing to his failure in figure study. Hence forward he concentrated upon landscape. He made some brief trips to Spain and to England with Simon Maris, neither of which apparently had any effect on the evolution of his art. The stylistic influence of Theosophy could date from this year.
1903. During this year he won the Willink van Collen prize at the 'Arti' with a still life. He made a visit to eastern Holland, the area of Brabant near Uder and Nistlerode with Mr. van den Briel (see map).
1904. On January 18th Mondrian rented a small house at St. Jagnstraat 29 in Uden. He was there a tenant until 27th January 1905. The year was spent painting in isolation from the Amsterdam milieu.
- 1905-08. Mondrian moved back to Amsterdam February 22nd 1905 renting a studio on Rembrandt Plein 10. This came about through the St. Lucas

his contacts with Simon Maris and Albert Hulshoff Pol (1883-1957). From 1905-08 he painted mainly in and near Amsterdam, working along the River Gein and surrounding landscape. With the help of the painter Hulshoff he visited the province of Overijssel (see map) the area called Twente. In 1908 he began his yearly trips to the island of Walcheren in Zeeland and to Domburg (see map).

1909. This year started with his first major retrospective exhibition together with C. R. H. Spoor 1867-1928 and Jan Sluyters. It was staged at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. The exhibition was reviewed by Frederick van Eden. In May of that year Mondrian joined the Dutch branch of the Theosophic society.

1910. He became a full member of the St. Lucas selection Jury. Exhibited a group of Pointillist works at St. Lucas. In December of that year he helped Conrad Kickert (1882-1965) found the Moderne Kuntskring and served with Jan Toorop (1858-1928) and Jan Sluyters on the governing committee.

1911. Sent a work called 'Soleil' to the spring Salon des Independents in Paris. During the summer months whilst resident in Zeeland he exhibited with a group of Walcheren artists centered around Jan Toorop. At the Moderne Kuntskring he saw for the first time the work of Picasso and Braque exhibited in the first exhibition October-November. Gave up his Amsterdam address on December 20th preparatory to moving to Paris.

1912. Arrived in Paris and registered as living at 26 rue de Depart. Made a brief visit to Zeeland during the summer of this year. Exhibited in the Salon des Independents in Paris and the Moderne Kuntskring in Amsterdam.

1913. Exhibited his Cubist paintings in Paris and Amsterdam. Met Jacob van Domselaar, and sent work to the first Deutsche Herbstsalon in Berlin.



1914-15. Residential continuation at 26 rue de Depart, exhibited paintings in Paris, the Netherlands. Exhibited at the Walrecht Gallery in The Hague during June. Reviewed by Plaaschaert. Returned to the Netherlands (it is concluded) in August to see his father who was ill. Outbreak of war caused him to decide not to return to Paris with other Dutch artists. Spent sometime in Domburg and Amsterdam before settling in Laren t'Gooi (see map). Stayed with his friend the composer Jacob van Domselaar. He then rented a studio at Pijlsteeg followed by one on the Noolseweg which leads to Blaricum. Mondrian met Mr. S. B. Slijper in Laren (Slijper lived Blaricum) they became close life-long friends and Slijper became Mondrian's patron. He came into contact with Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers who had a strong influence upon Mondrian's practical and theoretical development.

1915. During the last months of 1915 he began discussions with Theo van Doesburg which culminated in the foundation of the De Stijl group 1916-17.

Exhibited at Rotterdamsche Kuntskring 31 January - 1 February with Petrus Alma, le Fauconnier and Mondrian, work reviewed by Plaaschaert. Exhibited at the Stedelijk Museum 13-25 October Mondrian, Sluyters and Leo Gestel, le Fauconnier, J. C. van Elpen (architect).

1916. At the request of Van Doesburg Mondrian began to write up his notes on art into essay form with a view to publishing them in a proposed De Stijl magazine.

Exhibited regularly in the Netherlands. Completed a small number of the plus and minus paintings. Work reviewed by Plaaschaert at Hollandsche Kuntskring 14 March 1916.

1917. The first issue of De Stijl was published. Mondrian published one article, the other contributors being Bart van de Leek. Anthony Kok and J. J. P. Oud, editor Theo van Doesburg. This first publication came out in October. In May he exhibited in Amsterdam some 'Abstract Real' works compositions in colour and compositions with coloured planes. Reviewed by Plaaschaert June 2, 1917. It was the first of his series of

1918. The Lozenge paintings with grid structure were started. The first De Stijl manifesto was published in November with Mondrian as one of the signatories.

1919. Left Laren on 14 July 1919 for Paris, having exhibited in Hollandsche Kuntskring February and March. He published his essay 'Natural and abstract reality' in De Stijl. Lived temporarily at 5 rue de Coulmies and then at 26 rue de Depart.

1920. The Galerie Leonce Rosenberg published his De Stijl essay called 'Le neo plasticisme' (translated from the Dutch title 'Nieuwe beelding'). Later the French article was translated into German in 1925 and published by the Bauhaus as 'Die Neuegestaltung'. Editors Walter Gropius and Moholy Nagy printed by Albert Laren Munchen.

1921. Mondrian attempted to limit his palette to the primaries, red, yellow, and blue.

1922. During this, his fiftieth year, Mondrian's friends, S. B. Slijper, Petrus Alma and the architect J. J. P. Oud organised a retrospective at the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Exhibited at Leonce Rosenberg in Paris in the exhibition 'From cubism to a plastic renaissance'. Reviewed in the Rotterdamsche Courant (Paris 21st March, 1922, our own correspondent).

1923. The De Stijl group exhibited at Leonce Rosenbergs Galerie in the autumn. Sales of flower water colour (see illustration) in Holland. Slijper helped Mondrian with finance. Herman Hana wrote the newspaper article 'Piet Mondrian de pionier'. Few other exhibitions and few sales during that year.

1924-25. Theo van Doesburg re-introduces the diagonal element into his painting terming its re-introduction (Elementarism), thus causing Mondrian to withdraw from De Stijl. From this date he worked independently exhibiting in Germany, France and the Netherlands. But also in the



exhibition of Societe Anonyme in Brooklyn U. S. A. with the help of Katherine Dreier. His theoretical writings continued and *Die Neue Gestaltung* was published.

1927. During this year Mondrian published articles on 'Jazz and Neoplasticism'. 1. 10 Amsterdam in *International Revue*. (T. U. P. Doeken Kuntsdrukering) Printed by G. J. van Amerongen and 10 Amersfort. Also Mondrian wrote and published articles on interior architectural design. He exhibited two works in the exhibition organised by El Lissitzky 'Abstract cabinet' at the Landmuseum in Hanover, Germany. Reviewed in *Maanblad voor Beeldende Kunsten*.

1928-29. Exhibited in Amsterdam, The Hague and Dusseldorf.

1930. Mondrian exhibited work with the Cercle et Carre group. This group was founded by Torres Garcia and Michael Seuphor.

1931. Mondrian became a member of the group Abstraction-Creation, founded by Georges van Tongerloo and Auguste Herber. (Georges van Tongerloo had previously contributed to the *De Stijl* periodical 1917, nos. 9 and then frequently after that date.)

1934. During this year Mondrian met the American artist Harry Holtzman and also Ben Nicholson in Paris. In America more attention was paid to his work. James Johnson Sweeney and Alfred Barr both began to write articles on his work.

1936. Due to a demolition at 26 rue de Depart Mondrian moved to 278 Boulevard Raspail.

1937. The essay 'Plastic art and pure plastic art' was published in 'Circle', edited by Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo and J. L. Martin (published by Faber and Faber, London. Reprinted by Faber and Faber 1971).

1938. Wm. Sandberg the director of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam organised an exhibition of abstract art, work by Mondrian was included, the catalogue also contained an essay on abstract art written by Mondrian. Mondrian wrote to Harry Holtzman expressing the wish to emigrate to the U.S.A. but instead left Paris for England in September. Took up residence in a studio at 60 Park Hill Road, Hampstead, London. That studio was close to those of Ben Nicholson, Naum Gabo, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth. He became a member of the 'circle group'.

1940. Harry Holtzman gave assistance to Mondrian and he was able to leave for New York where he took up residence in a studio at 353 East 52 St. He became a member of the Group of American Abstract Artists, whose numbers include Harry Holtzman, Fritz Glarner, Carl Holty, Charmion von Wiegand.

1941. A number of unfinished works were brought from Europe into these he introduced unbounded colour planes and coloured lines.

1942. During January to February he held his first one-man American exhibition at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery. Publishing through the Gallery essays which include 'Toward the true vision of reality'. Other essays published were 'Pure plastic art' and 'Abstract art'. Reviews of his work were written by Jan Engleman (Piet Mondrian Absolute Schilderkunst) and in the Knickerbocker Weekly. (Mondrian a great Dutch painter) in the New York Herald Tribune an article by Robert M. Coates. This year saw the start on his two final works 'Broadway Boogie Woogie' and 'Victory Woogie'.

1943. His second exhibition was held at the Valentine Dudensing Gallery. He exhibited six works including 'Broadway Boogie Woogie'. He continued to work on 'Victory Boogie Woogie'. He moved his studio from 353 East End 52 St. to 15 East and 59 St.

1944. Mondrian died on the 1st February of pneumonia. The New York Times recorded his death in the editorial article (Death of an artist). His funeral oration was given by Alfred Baar.



Bibliography. Section 1. Piet Mondrian's writings 1909-1944: as used in this study.

Section 2. Other De Stijl artists writings and closely related texts to Mondrian's writings.

Section 3. Reference sources , books and articles, relating directly to Piet Mondrian's work with additional indirectly related books and essays.

Section 4. Philosophic and Theosophic sources used in direct connection with this study.

Section 5. Sources used as a background to this study to establish a foundation and a general context.

Bibliography, section 1.

Piet Mondrian's writings 1909-1944; as used in this study.

1. Letter to Querido in response to the latter's article  
'A study of the painters Spoor, Mondrian and Sluyters'.  
The article appeared in the 'De Controleur May 1909',  
rp, 29/10/1909. See Two Mondrian Sketch Books 1912-  
1914, R. P. Welsh, J. M. Joosten: Meulenhoff International  
nv Amsterdam, 1969, pp 9-10.
2. Mondrian's notes, *ibid*.
3. Plastic art and Pure plastic art Circle: Faber and  
Faber, London 1937, rp 1971, pp 41-56.
4. Neoplasticism in painting: introduction. De Stijl vol 1  
no 1 pp 2-6. De Stijl ; H. L. C. Jaffe Thames and Hudson  
tr R. R. Symonds, 1970, pp 36-40.
5. Neoplasticism as style, De Stijl vol. 1 no 2 pp 13-18.  
*ibid* pp 40-53.
6. The new plastic as abstract real painting: the plastic  
means and composition. De Stijl vol 1 no 3 pp 29-31  
and De Stijl vol 1 no 4 pp 41-44. *Ibid* pp 54-56 and  
56-60.
7. The rationality of Neoplasticism. De Stijl vol 1 no 5  
pp 49-54 and De Stijl vol 1 no 7 pp 73-77 *Ibid* pp 60-65  
and 65-68.
8. From the natural to the abstract: from the indeterminate  
to the determinate. De Stijl vol 1 no 8, pp 88-91. De Stijl  
vol 1 no 9, pp 102-108, De Stijl no 10. 1918, pp 121-  
124. De Stijl vol 1 no 11, pp 125-135. *Ibid* pp 68-70  
78-79, 79-81, 82-88.
9. Conclusion: Nature and Spirit as male and female  
elements. De Stijl vol 1 no 12 pp 140-147. *Ibid* pp  
88-93
10. The Determinate and the Indeterminate (supplement)  
De Stijl, vol. 2 no 2 pp 14-19. *Ibid* pp 103-107.
11. A dialogue on Neoplasticism. De Stijl vol 2 no 4 pp  
37-39, De Stijl vol 2 no 5 pp 42-53 *Ibid* pp 117-126



12. The realization of Neoplasticism in the distant future and in architecture today. De Stijl vol 5 no 3 pp 41-47, De Stijl vol 5 no 5 pp 65-71. Ibid 163-171.
13. Is painting secondary to architecture? De Stijl vol 6 no 5 pp 62-64. Ibid pp 183-184.
14. No axiom but the plastic. De Stijl vol 6 no 6/7 pp 83-85. Ibid pp 188-190.
15. The plastic means. De Stijl Jubilee number 1927 pp 37-38. Ibid pp 226.
16. Natural Reality and Abstract Reality. An essay in dialogue form. 1919-1920. Piet Mondrian. M. Seuphor, H. N. Abrams, New York: pp 303-352, first published in De Stijl in thirteen installments between 1919 and 1920.
17. Documentation on Mondrian. 26 letters from Mondrian to Loedwijk Schelfhout and H. P. Bremmer (1910-1918) Collected and compiled by J. M. Joosten and published in Museum Journal. Tr into English by Mrs Drost-Felix April 1976.
18. Plastic art and Pure plastic art :towards a true vision of reality. A new realism Abstract Art Pure Plastic Art Liberation from oppresion in art and life Documents of Modern Art Wittenborn Schultz Inc New York Fp 1945, 2nd ed 1947.
19. L'art realiste et L'art supprealiste la morphoplastique et la Neoplastique Cercle et Carre 2 Paris 1931.
- 20 New Art-New Life. (The culture of pure relationships) De Stijl:the Dutch contribution to Modern Art Prof Dr. H. L. C Jaffe. Alec Tiranti London Written by Mondrian in Paris 1931. tr Til Brugman
- 21 The true value of oppositions Paris 1934 Ibid
22. Home street-city 1926 Mondrian catalogue Pace Gallery New York 1969-70, tr Martin S James and Harry Holtzman
- 23 Pure Abstract Art. An unpublished manuscript in the Mondrian archive Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie, Den Haag Nederland

24. De Groote Boulevards, Paris March 1920.  
De Nieuwe Amsterdammer 1920. Holtzman  
Archive. Conn U. S. A. .
25. Cubisme et La Neoplasticue. Paris March 1920  
ibid.
26. Les Arts et La Beaute de notre ambiance tangible:  
L'expression plastique par la forms. Paris 1924 Ibid
27. Het Neoplasticisme (De Nieuwe Beelding) en zijn  
(Hare) Realiseering in De Muziek. De Stijl vol 2  
no 1 1922.
28. A bas l'harmonie traditionnelle. Paris 1924. Holtzman  
Archive.
29. De Bruiteur Futuristes Italiens en het Nieuwe de  
Muziek. De Stijl vol 4 no 8 and 9 1921.
30. L'Art Nouveau- La vie Nouvelle (La culture des  
rapports purs) Paris Dec 1931, Holtzman Archive
31. Neo Plasticism Merz 1 1923 ans L'effort Moderne  
Leonce Rosenberg, Paris Nov 1923.
32. L'evolution de l'humanite est l'evolution de l'art  
L'Effort Moderne . Paris Nov 1924 , Holtzman Archive
33. L' Expression plastique nouvelle dans la peinture.  
Cahiers d'art , no 7 Paris 1926.
34. Kunst zonder onderwerp. (Art without a subject)  
March 1938, written for catalogue 'Abstract Art',  
Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam Nederland 1938.  
Holtzman Archive.
35. Catalogue statement. Ca 1943. 'From Eleven Europeans  
in America' Bulletin Museum of Modern Art , New  
York, X11 4 and 5 . Ibid pp362-4.
36. The necessity of a new art teaching. Holtzman  
Archive.
37. Towards the true vision of reality. Piet Mondrian  
Catalogue 1942. Rp Wittenborn New York 1946.



Bibliography section 2.

Other De Stijl artists writings and closely related texts to Mondrian's writings.

1. Theo van Doesburg. Art criticism, Modern Art in the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam. Exhibition, Mondrian, Sluyters, Schelfhout Le Fauconnier. Eenheid 283 6 Nov 1915. Theo van Doesburg, Joost Baljeu, Studio Vista 1974 pp 105-108, tr Joost Baljeu.
2. Thought, vision and creation. De Stijl vol 2 no 2 Dec 1918, pp23-24, ibid pp 108-110.
3. Caminoscopy (Aldo Camino). De Stijl 1 vol 1V 5 June 1921 pp 66-67. ibid p113.
4. Towards a newly shaped world Manifesto 111 De Stijl vol 4 no 8 1921. pp 125-6, ibid pp 113-114.
5. The will to style . De Stijl vol 5 no 2 Feb 1922 pp 23-32, vol 5 no 3 March 1922, pp33-41., ibid 115-126.
6. Statement to the International Union of Progressive Artists. Creative demands of Se Stijl. De Stijl vol 4 April 1922 pp 59-62, ibid pp 126-7.
7. The new aesthetics and its realization. Weimar 1922 De Stijl vol 5 March 1923 pp 10-14, ibid pp127-131
8. Against problem art. The Hague 1923 De Stijl vol 6 April 1923 pp 17-19, ibid pp 135-136.
9. The significance of colour for interior and architecture Bouwkundig Weekblad vol 44, no 21, 1923 pp232-4, ibid pp 137-140.
10. Towards Elementary Plastic Expression Material zur elementaren Gestaltung. G 1 July 1923, ibid pp 140-142.
11. Towards plastic architecture. Paris 1924. De Stijl series X11 6-7 pp 78-83, ibid 142-147.
12. Towards collective construction. Theo van Doesburg and C. van Eesteren, Paris 1923. De Stijl X11 6-7, pp 89-91, ibid 147-48.

13. Theo van Doesburg. The end of art. Paris 1925 De Stijl, series X11 9  
1924-25. Ibid pp 135-6 and 149-151
14. Painting:from composition towards counter -  
composition. Paris 1926 De Stijl series X111, 73-4  
pp17-18, 23-7. Ibid pp 151-156.
15. Painting and plastic art. On counter composition  
and counter-plastic-Elementarism (A manifesto  
fragment) Rome July 1926. De Stijl. series X111. 1  
75-6 1926, pp35-43 Ibid pp 156-161
- 16.. Painting and plastic art:Elementarism (fragment of a  
manifesto) Paris April 1926 De Stijl X111 78  
1926-7, pp 82-7, Ibid pp 163-6
17. Elementarism and it's origins De Stijl , Aubette  
Issue, series XV 87-9, 1928, pp 20-5. Ibid pp 165-175
18. Space time and colour De Stijl Aubette Issue,  
series XV, 87-9, 1928, pp 26-7, 31-34, Ibid 175-180
19. Carlsund, Doesburg. Art Concret The basis of concrete painting.  
Helion, Tutundjian, Art Concret, April 1930, p1. Ibid pp 180-1  
Wantz
- 20.Theo van Doesburg. Comments on the basis of concrete painting Paris  
Jan 1930 Art Concret, 1930 pp 2-4. Ibid pp 181-2
21. Towards white painting. Paris December 1929  
Art Concret April 1930 pp 11-12. Ibid p183.
22. Elementarism(the elements of the new painting).  
Paris 13 July 1930 De Stijl, Van Doesburg Issue,  
(last issue) January 1932. pp17-19. Ibid pp 184-5.
23. From intuition to certitude Paris 1930 Realites  
Nouvelles 1947, no 1 , p3. Ibid pp 185-6
24. The struggle for the new 1929-30 Unpublished  
material Tr Joost Baljeu. pb in Ibid pp 187-9
25. The new architecture and it's consequences 1930  
Unpublished material. Tr Joost Baljeu pb Ibid  
pp 189-198.



26. Theo van Doesburg. Fundamental principles. 1930. Unpublished material. Tr Joost Baljeu, pb Ibid pp 198-204.
27. Notes on Monumental Art with reference to two fragments of a building, ( hall in holiday centre Noordwijkerhout). De Stijl vol 11, no 1 pp 10-12. Opcit section 1, 4, pp 99-102.
28. On looking at new painting. De Stijl vol 11 no 4. pp 42-44. Ibid pp 127-130.
29. Painting by Giorgio de Chirico and a chair by Rietveld. De Stijl vol 111, no 5 , p46. Ibid p143.
30. Against imitative artists. De Stijl vol V No 7 . pp 95-6. Ibid pp 177-9
31. General Introduction Jubilee Number 1927. De Stijl, pp 2-9 . Ibid p 213.
32. Notes on L'Aubette at Strasbourg De Stijl vol V111, Aubette Number pp 2-13. Ibid pp 232-7.
33. Bart van der Leck. The place of Modern Painting in Architecture. De Stijl vol 1 No 2 pp 6-7. Ibid pp 93-4.
34. On painting and building. De Stijl, vol 1, No 4 . Bart van der Leck 1876-1958. Rijksmuseum Kroller Muller 1976. Tr Patricia Wardle
35. Compiles autobiographical memoirs partly as a result of requests from Holland and elsewhere. Text spoken on tape 7 June 1957. Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, no 204, 1959. Tr Ina Rike. Rp Ibid.
- 36 J. J. P. Oud. The monumental townscape. Leiden 9/7/1917. De Stijl vol 1 , No 1 pp 10-11. Opcit section 1 , 4 pp 95-6.
37. Art and machine. De Stijl vol 1 No 3 (4) pp 25-7. Ibid 96-8.
38. Orientation. Ibid pp 132-142.
39. Gerrit. T. Rietveld. Notes on a baby chair. De Stijl Vol 11 No 9 p 102. Ibid pp 130 -1

40. C. van Eesteren. Ten years of Stijl Art , technique and town planning.  
The Hague, De Stijl Jubilee Number 1927. pp 93-6.  
Ibid pp 227-8.
41. G. Vantongerloo. To percieve. Data. Edited by A. Hill. Pb Faber and Faber  
1968, pp 22-41.
42. E. Bornstein. The oblique in art:towards the oblique in space.  
Pb in The Structurist 1969, pp 32-42.
43. Theo van Doesburg. Elemental Formation. (Zur Elementaren Gestaltung)  
Pb 'G' Tr Richard Taylor, rpb Form 3 Dec 1966 p29
44. Mies van der Rohe. Industrialised building: 'G' The Office Block.  
Tr Nicholas Bullock. Form 3. 1966 pp 30-.31 .
45. Theo van Doesburg. Introduction to Vol 2 of De Stijl 1919. Pb in De Stijl  
11 Oct 1919. p1. De Stijl cat Stedelijk Museum, rpb  
1951 pp 7-9. Theories of Modern Art:a source book  
by artists and critics. Herschel. B. Chipp.  
Uni of California, 1968, 5th printing pp 324-5.
46. Kasimir Malevitch. Suprematism. Pb The Non -Objective World, pp67-100.  
Rpb Ibid pp 341-6.
47. Wassily Kandinsky. Concret Art. 1938. From XX Siecle(Paris) No 1  
rpb No 13 Dec 1959 pp 9-11. On the problem of  
form, ch 111 ca 1912. Wirkung der Farbe (tr painting:  
the effect of colour), wr 1910 pb in 1912. in  
Uber das Geistige in der Kunst. rpb in ch 111 above.  
Ibid pp 346-9.
48. De Stijl . Rp in two volumes Athenaeum-Polak &  
Van Gennep nv.



Bibliography, section 3.

Reference sources, books and articles , relating directly to Piet Mondrian's work with additional indirectly related books and essays. The denotion of essays is made with the use of underlining.

1. Michel Seuphor. Piet Mondrian. Harry N. Abrams Inc New York. 1956

2. L. F. J. Wijsenbeek. Piet Mondrian. Tr Irene Gibbons Studio Vista.

Fpb in Germany by Verlag Aurel Borens Recklinghausen , 1968.

3. Frank Elgar. Mondrian. Tr T Walton , Thames and Hudson 1968.

4, Italo Tomassoni. Mondrian. 20 th Century Masters Hamlyn 1970.

5. Prof. Dr . H. L. C. Jaffé. Mondrian. Thames and Hudson, Tr R. R. Symonds. 1970.

6. Prof Dr. H. L. C. Jaffé. De Stijl :the Dutch contribution to Modern Art. Alec Tiranti London.

7. Robert Rosenblum. Notes on Mondrian and Romanticism . Piet Mondrian Catalogue Toronto, Philadelphia and The Hague 1966, pp17-21.

8. Robert Welsh. Piet Mondrian. The naturalistic period 1888-1908 , The transition 1909-1915. De Stijl and After 1916-1944. Piet Mondrian catalogue , Toronto , Philadelphia, The Hague , 1966. PP22-103, 104-157, 158-225.

9L. F. J. Wijsenbeek. Introduction Mondrian Centennial Catalogue. Guggenheim Museum New York 1971, pp 25-33.

10. Robert Welsh. Mondrian and Theosophy. Ibid pp 35-51.

11. Joop Joosten Mondrian: between Cubism and Abstraction. Ibid pp 53-66.

12. Nelly van Doesburg. Some memories of Mondrian. Ibid pp 67-73.

13. Max Bill, Composition 1, with blue and yellow , 1925. Ibid pp 74-6.

14. Margit Rowell. Interview with Charmion von Wiegand. June 20th 1971. Ibid pp 71-86.

15. Robert Welsh, Joop Joosten, preface by Harry Holtzman. Two Mondrian Sketch Books. Meulenhoff International Amsterdam. 1969.

16. Cor Blok . Piet Mondrian : een catalogus van zijn werk in Nederlands openbaar bezit. Meulenhoff Amsterdam 1974.

17. M. Seuphor. Piet Mondrian. Haags Gemeente Museum 1955.

18. Cor Blok. Mondrian , in de collectie van het Haags Gemeente Museum 1964.

19. Cor Blok. Mondrian, in de collectie van het Haags Gemeente Museum. 1968.

20H. L. C. Jaffé. De Stijl. Tr Roy Edwards. Meulenhoff.

21. Alfred H. Barr. Jr De Stijl Museum of Modern Art New York 1961.

22. Enno Develing . Waardevolle catalogus van Mondrian's werk.

De Waarheid van zaterdag 4 januari 1975

23. Martin. S James. Mondrian and the Dutch Symbolists.  
Art Journal XX111 2, pp103-111.
24. Martin . S. James. The realism behind Mondrian's geometry.  
Art News Dec 1957. pp34-37, 59-61.
25. H. Felix Kraus. Mondrian, a great modern Dutch painter. Knickerbocker  
Weekly 11, 30, 1942, p24-25.
26. James Johnson Sweeney. Mondrian the Dutch and De Stijl.  
Art News , summer 1951. pp 24-25, 63-64.
27. John Coplans. Mondrian at Santa Barbara.  
Art Forum, March 1965, pp28-31.
28. Anthony Hill. Art and Mathesis: Mondrian's structures.  
Leonardo Vol 1, pp 233-242. Pergamon Press 1968.
29. Joost Baljeu. The problem of reality with Suprematism, Constructivism,  
Proun, Neoplasticism and Elementarism.  
Lugano Review 1 no 1 1965., pp 105-124.
30. Maurice Agis and Peter Jones. Theo van Doesburg is of today.  
Form 9 April 1969 pp 14 -17.
31. Cor Blok. Theo van Doesburg  
Art International. vol X111/4 April 20 1969.
32. Robert Welsh. The Growing Influence of Mondrian.  
Canadian Art XX111, 1966, pp44-49.
33. Brydon Smith, More about Mondrian .  
Canadian Art. XX11 pp 14-17.
34. Robert Welsh. The Hortus Conclusus of Piet Mondrian.  
The Connoisseur Feb 1966, pp 132-135.
35. Robert Welsh. Landscape into music: Mondrian's New York period.  
Arts Magazine Feb 1966, pp 33-39.
36. Jack Burnham. Mondrian's American Circle  
Arts Magazine Summer 1973.
37. E. Goossen. Colour and light  
Arts Magazine. July 1974.
38. Mahonri. Sharp Young. Mondrian revalued: the history of one picture.  
Apollo no 83 1966, pp 289-296.
39. George Schmidt. Parts of the preface by George Schmidt to Seuphor's  
Mondrian catalogue, Zurich exhibition, Gallerie Beyler, Switzerland.
40. Peter Gay. Mondrian  
Horizon, winter 1975. Pp 64-79.



41. Peter Gay. Art and Act. Mondrian :the claims of privacy. ch 4 pp175-228.  
On causes in history. Manet, Grpious, Mondrian. Harper Row 1976.
42. Joseph Masheck. Mondrian the New Yorker.  
Art Forum Oct 1974 pp 58-65.
43. Carl Holty. Mondrian in New York:a memoir.  
Arts, Sept 1957, pp 17-21.
44. Barbara Rose. Mondrian in New York.  
Art Forum, Dec 72 . Pp54-63.
45. John Elderfield. Mondrian , Newman, Noland:two notes on changes  
of style.  
Art Forum Dec 71. Pp 48-53.
46. Joseph. T. Butler. The American way with art.  
The Connoisseur pp 220-221
47. New York reviews and previews. Mondrian and Newman.  
Art in America, pp29-31.
48. H. L. C. Jaffé. The De Stijl concept of space.  
The Structurist, No 8 pp 8-11 1968.
49. H. L. C. Jaffé. The diagonal principle in the works of van Doesburg  
and Mondrian.  
The Structurist: no 9 pp 15-21 1969.
49. Harry Holtzman. Piet Mondrian's environment. Part 2  
Catalogue Sidney Janis Gallery New York March 1970.  
Fpb in Dutch in (1) 10 1927, vol 1 no 1 and in English tr in  
Formation Arts, Communications , Environment 1950.
50. Harry Holtzman. Piet Mondrian's personality.  
Sidney Janis Gallery Catalogue 1974.
51. Nancy Dillow. Mondrian and The Hague School.  
Catalogue Norman Mackenzie Gallery Edmonton Canada 1969.
52. Elka Schrijver. Mondrian at the Hague.  
Connoisseur Aug 72, pp 248-253.
53. Aleida Betsy Loosjes Terpstra. Moderne Kunst in Nederland 1900-1914  
Haentjens Dekker en Gumbert Utrecht , 1959.
54. Albert William. Levi. Mondrian as Metaphysician.  
Kenyon Review. Vol X111, 1951, no 3 pp 385-393.
55. Marion Wolf. The paradox of Mondrian .  
Arts Magazine Sept/Oct 1971. Pp 21-26.

56. Reyner Banham. Mondrian and the philosophy of Modern Design.  
Architectural Review Oct 1957, pp 227-9.
57. Donald McNamee. Van Doesburgs Cow. A crucial transition in the structure and reality of art.  
The Structurist No 8 1968, pp 12-20.
58. Albert Plasschaert. Mondrian Review.  
Kunst en Letternieuws. Hollandsche Kunstenaarskring. Amsterdam  
14 March 1916.
59. Albert Plaaschaert. Mondrian Review.  
(Mondrian bij Walrecht Gallerie Den Haag ) 12 July 1914.
60. Albert Plaaschaert. Mondrian Review.  
(Mondrian bij Walrecht) 26 June 1914.
61. Albert Plaaschaert. Mondrian in de Rotterdamschen Kunstkring. -  
26 Feb 1915. Tr of these articles by Mervrouw Drost Felix  
Den Haag 1976. Rijks Bureau voor Kunst Historische Documentatie .
62. Joop Joosten. Abstraction and compositional innovation.  
Art Forum April 1973. Pp 55-58.
63. Joop Joosten . Documentation on Mondrian. 26 letters from P. Mondrian to L. Schelfhout and H. P. Bremmer. 1910 to 1918.  
Museum Journal 1968  
Tr by Mervrouw Drost Felix 1976. Den Haag.
64. Jan Engelman. Piet Mondrian: zeventig jaar geworden Absolute Schilderkunst.  
Kroniek van Kunst en Wetenschap 1942. Mondrian Archive  
Rijks Bureau voor Kunst Historische Documentatie. Den Haag.
65. Jan Engelman. Het Calvinisme van Mondrian (Geestelijke armoede of rijkdom. De ingewijden van De Stijl.  
De Tijd. March 1957. Rijks Bureau voor Kunst Historische Documentatie.
66. Jan Engelman, Vernieuwing ging uit van negentig. Het geval Piet Mondrian.  
De Tijd 5 Nov 1955. Rijks Bureau voor Kunst Historische Documentatie.
67. Jan Engelman. Piet Mondrian en de abstracte kunst.  
VN 21 Dec 1946. Rijks Bureau voor Kunst Historische Documentatie.
68. Michel Seuphor. Introduction for Mondrian's Exhibition at L'Orangerie Paris. 1969.



69. Robert Welsh. The birth of De Stijl. part one.  
Art Forum April 1973. PP 50-55.
70. Rudolf W. Oxenaar. The birth of De Stijl, part two :Bart van der Leek.  
Art Forum June 1973, pp36-43.
71. Modern Dutch Pictures. The Alexander Young Collection.  
Studio. XXXIX no 166 Jan 1907 pp 287-306.
72. Jan Veth. Modern Dutch Art. The work of Josef Israels.  
Studio XXVI no 114 Sept 1902. pp 239-251.
73. Modern Dutch Art. The etchings of Matthew Maris.  
Studio XXX no 129, Dec 1903, pp 205 -8.
74. P. Zichen. The latter Jacob Maris.  
Studio IX, Feb 1900, 36 pp 231-240.
75. Studio talk.  
Studio LXVI no 273, Dec 1913, pp 215-218.
76. 'Modern etching and engraving in Holland' in Modern Etching and Engraving.  
Studio London 1902 , Special Summer Number.
77. 'Holland' in Modern Etching, Mezzotint and Drypoint.  
Studio, London 1913. Special Summer Number.
78. Modern Dutch Portrait Painting, with special reference to the work of Josef Israels.  
Studio L.II, no 216 March 1911, pp 106-120.
79. The van Randwijk Collection 1: The School of the Hague.  
Studio LV no 228 March 1912, pp 96-107.
80. Museum Mesdag Catalogue. Nederlandse negentiende - eeuwse schilderijen, tekeningen en grafiek. Pb 1975.
81. Catalogue of the French School of the 19 century painters . Museum Mesdag The Hague , pb in 1964.
82. Rosenberg, Slive and Kuile. Dutch art and architecture 1600 - 1800.  
Penguin Books 1966.
83. William Innes Homer. Seurat and the science of painting.  
M. I. T . Press 1964.
84. Jean Bouret. The Barbizon School and 19th century French Landscape Painting.  
Thames and Hudson 1973.
85. W. Vaughan. H. Borsch-Supan and H. J. Reidhart. C. D. Friedrich 1774-1890.  
Tate Gallery London 1972.

86. H. Borsch - Supan. C. D. Friedrich .

Thames and Hudson 1974.

87. John Rewald. Post Impressionism: from Van Gogh to Gauguin.

Museum of Modern Art New York 1966.

88. Henri Dorra and John Rewald. Seurat.

Les Beaux Arts. Editions D'etudes et de documents . L'Oeuvre Peint

Biographie et Catalogue Critique dans Les Beaux-Arts 1959.

88. Otto Benesch. Edvard Munch. Tr from the German by Joan Spencer.

Phaidon London 1960.

89. Denys Sutton. André Derain .

Phaidon 1959.

90. John Rewald. Paul Cézanne: a biography. Tr Margure H. Liehman.

Schocken 1968.

91. Joost Baljeu. Theo van Doesburg.

Studio Vista London 1974.

92. Albert Boime. The Academy and French painting in the 19 century.

Phaidon 1971.

93. Otto Benesch. Rembrandt, vol 1, collected writings.

Rembrandt's Artistic heritage.

The Dutch Landscape in Rembrandt's period.

Rembrandt and the Gothic tradition.

Rembrandt's artistic heritage from Goya to Cezanne.

Phaidon 1970.

94. Wolfgang Stechow. Dutch Landscape Painting in the 17 century. Vol 1 and 2.

Phaido 1968.

95. J. M. Nash. The age of Rembrandt and Vermeer.

Phaidon 1972.

96. O. Millar. (Intro). Dutch Pictures from the Royal Collection. The

Queens Gallery . Buckingham Palace. Lund and Humphries 1971.

97. William C. Seitz. Mondrian and the issue of relationships.

Art Forum Feb 1972. Pp70-75.

98. Robert Pincas Witten. The Iconography of Symbolist Painting.

Art Forum Jan 1970, pp 56-62.

99. Charles M. Rosenberg. Cubist object treatment: a perceptual analysis.

Art Forum, April 71 pp30-36.



100. David Lewis. Mondrian. Wittenborn 1957.
101. Joost Baljeu. Mondrian or Miro.  
De Beak Amsterdam. Pb 1958.
102. Hannah Hedrich. Van Doesburg's dream.  
The Structurist. no 9 1969 pp 9-13.
103. Daniel Robbins. From Symbolism to Cubism: The Abbaye of Creteil.  
Art Journal XX111 2 pp 111-116.
104. Donald B. Kuspit. The illusion of the Absolute in Abstract Art.  
Art Journal Fall 1971, pp 26-30.
105. Carlo L. Ragghianti. Mondrina e 18 Arte del XX secolo.  
Milan Edizioni di Comunita, 1962.
106. R. Fuchs. Mondrian in Holland. Studio 183, May 1972 pp 229-31.
107. Donald McNamee. Van Doesburg's Elementarism. New translations of his essays and Manifesto, originally published in De Stijl.  
The Structurist, no 9 1969, pp 22-31.
108. Hannah Hedrich. New translations of Van Doesburg's writings.  
The Structurist, no 9 1969, pp 75-85.
109. Albert Plaaschaert. Jan Toorop.  
J. H. de Bussy Amsterdam 1925.
110. Robert Stiebelhoff. The early developments of Jan Toorop 1879-1892.  
Thesis in the Mondrian Archive Haags Gemeente Museum.
111. Brydon Smith. The search for a universal plastic expression.  
Canadian Art XX111, 1966.
112. F. Novotny. Paul Cézanne. 1839-1906.  
Phaidon 1961.
113. John Golding. Cubism : a history and analysis. 1907-1914.  
Faber and Faber London 1959.
114. Charmion von Wiegand. The meaning of Mondrian.  
Journal of Aesthetics. 11 no 8 fall 1943, pp 62-70.
115. Adrian Heath. Abstract painting its origin and meaning: Piet Mondrian  
pp 9-14. Alec Tiranti London 1957.
116. Sam Hunter . Mondrian . New York Abrams . 1958.
117. Sixten Ringbom. The Sounding Cosmos.  
Abo Akademi 1970.

118. P. Singelenberg. H. P. Berlage : Idea and Style.  
Haentjens Dekker en Gumbert Utrecht 1972.
119. P. Singelenberg. Nederlandse Architectuur, Introduction. Berlage  
1856-1934.  
Manfred Bock . Building materials.  
P. Singelenberg. Work.  
Manfred Bock. Town planning.  
Manfred Bock . House building.  
Catalogue Haags Gemeente Museum 1975.
120. L. K. Eaton. Nederlandse Architectuur. Americana. 1880-1930.  
Auke van der Woud The new world.  
Auke van der Woud. Variations on a theme.  
Auke van der Woud . High buildings in the Low Countries.  
Tom van Leeuwen. Commercial Style: excursions between the years  
1880 and 1914.  
Paul Hefting. Correspondence with America.  
Catalogue Rijks Museum Kröller - Müller 1975.
121. Ellinoor Berbvelt. Nederlandse Architectuur. Amsterdamse School  
1910-1930.  
Adriaan Venema. Social and economic aspects of the Amsterdam School.  
Ellinoor Berbvelt. Legislation and social -economic background.  
Frans van Burkom. /Wim de Wit. Design as art, art as design.  
Wim de Wit. The Architecture of the Amsterdam School.  
Frans van Burkom. Art and design in the Netherlands.  
Catalogue Stedelijk Museum 1975.
122. Manfred Bock. Nederlandse Architectuur 1893-1918.  
Mabel Borst-Hoogendonk , Introduction.  
W. C. Bauer. 31. 9. 1862 -- 24. 4. 1904.  
Willem Kromhout. 10. 5. 1864--22. 6. 1940.  
H. J. M. Walenkamp. 12. 12. 1871. -- 24. 9. 1933.  
K. P. C. Bazel. 14. 2. 1869--1928.  
J. L. M. Lauweriks. 25. 8. 1864-- 15. 4. 1932.  
Catalogue Architectura Museum 1975.
123. A. W. Reinink. K. P. C. de Bazel. Art and Architecture in the Netherlands.  
Meulenhoff Amsterdam 1965.



124. Bettina Spaanstra-Polak. Symbolism :Art and Architecture in the Netherlands. Meulenhoff Amsterdam 1967.
125. Willem Ostwald. The Colour Primer. Tr Faber Birren. Van Nostrand Reinhold . New York 1969.
126. J. W. Goethe. Colour Theory. Tr Rupprecht Matthaei. Studio Vista 1971.
127. J. E. Spingurn. Goethe's Literary Essays. A selection in English. Ungar 1921, rp 1964.
- 128 . R. D. Oxenaar. Bart van der Leek, 1876-1958. Catalogue Rijks Museum Kroller Muller 1976.
129. Herbert Read . Art Now. Ch 4 Towards Abstraction: the theory of pure form. Faber and Faber, fpb 1933, revised 1960.
130. Herschel B. Chipp. Theories of Modern Art. California University Press. Fpb 1968, 5th printing 1975.
- (1) Post Impressionism. Individual paths to construction and expression. pp 11-47. Including Introduction; The letters of Cézanne pp 11-16 Paul Cézanne . Excerpts from the letters. Pp 16-23. Introduction: The letters of van Gogh. pp 24-29. Vincent van Gogh: Excerpts from the letters. Pp 29-47
- (2) Symbolism and other Subjectivist tendencies. Form and the Evocation of feeling. Introduction pp 48-57. Paul Gauguin : Synthetist Theories. Pp 67-77. Gauguin on primitivism. Pp 78-86. Symbolist theories. Albert Aurier Pp 87-93. Maurice Lenis pp 94-105. Ferdinand Hodler, pp 107-109. James Ensor. Pp 109-114. Edvard Munch pp 114-116. Odilon Redon pp 116-119. Henry van der Velde pp 120 -123.
- (3). Fauvism and Expressionism. The creative intuition. Introduction by Peter Selz. pp 124-128. Fauvism : Henry Rousseau p 129. Henri Matisse. Pp 130-143. Maurice Vlaminck, pp 144-145. Expressionism. Emil Nolde. Pp 146-151. Wassily Kandinsky pp 152-170. Oskar Kokoschka. Pp 171-174. Ernst Ludwig Kirchner. Pp 175-177. Franz Marc. Pp 178-181. Paul Klee . Pp 182-186. Max Beckman. Pp 187-192.
- (4 ) Cubism : form as expression. Introduction. Pp 193- 199. André Salmon. Pp 199-207. Albert Gleizes and Jean Metzinger. Pp 207-216. G. Apollinaire. Pp 216-248. D. H. Kahnweiler. Pp 248-259. Georges Braque. Pp 259-263. P. Picasso. Pp 263-273. J. Gris. Pp 274-277. F. Léger. Pp 277-280.

(5). Futurism. Dynamism as the expression of the Modern World.

Introduction. J. C. Taylor. Pp 281-284. F. T. Marinetti. Pp284-297.

U. Boccioni Pp 298-303. C. Carra. P 304-308.

(6). Neoplasticism and Constructivism. Abstract and Non Objective Art.

Introduction pp 309-317. R. Delaunay. Pp317-320. S. M. Wright. Pp320-321.

P. Mondrian. Pp321-323. T. v. Doesburg. Pp 324-325. N. Gabo. Pp 325-

337. K. Malevich. Pp337-346. W. Kandinsky. Pp346-349. P. Mondrian.

Pp 349-364. C. Brancusi. Pp364-365.

131. Leroy C. Breunig. Apollinaire on Art :Essays and Reviews 1902-1918.

Tr Susan Suleiman.

The Documents of Modern Art. Thames and Hudson, London 1972.

Articles on Mondrian pp 282, 284, 289. Originally pb in Montjoie 1, 3, 1913.

132. Frank Elgar. Picasso : a study of his work. Tr F. Scarfe.

Thames and Hudson 1956.

133. W. Uhde. Vincent van Gogh. Phaidon London 1961.

134. H. L. C. Jaffé. De Stijl and Architecture. Form 1967 Sept pp5-7.

135. Nicholas Bullock. Selected writings from De Stijl. Tr Nicholas Bullock.

Form 5, 1967, p6.

136. Joost Baljeu. The Fourth Dimension in NeoPlasticism. Form 9 April

1969, pp 6-13.

137. Maurice Agis and Peter Jones. Theo van Doesburg is of today.

Form 9 April 1969, pp 14-17.

138. H. Hana. Piet Mondrian ,de pionier. Wil en weg 2 , 1923/4.

Rijks Bureau voor Kunst Historische Documentatie.

139. Brydon Smith. The search for universal plastic expression.

Canadian Art , 13 Oct 1966, pp 14-17.

140. A. M. Hammacher. De Stijl and their impact. Cat Marlborough -

Gerson Gallery New York. 1964.

141. Robert Rosenblum. Modern painting and the Northern Romantic

Tradition. From Friedrich to Rothko. Thames and Hudson 1975.



142. Herbert Henkels, Rik Sauwen, Germaain Viatte, Michel Seuphor, 1918-76.

A book in two volumes published in conjunction with the Michel Seuphor retrospective exhibition at the Haags Gemeente Museum in 1976. Pb by Mercatorfonds Antwerpen and The Haags Gemeente Museum.

Mondrian references. Vol 1. pp12, 13, 15, 17, 24, 37, 44, 54, 56, 59, 62, 63, 66, 67, 77, 80, 85, 90-92, 101, 105, 106, 117-120, 123, 130, 135, 143, 169, 170, 210-213, 216, 220, 224, 225-227, 239-241, 248, 249, 276-279, 305, 306, 310, 31-313, 315, 318, 320-323, 327, 342, 344-347, 355.

Vol 2 Overzicht. pp (1) 79, 96. (11) 124, 178.

143. Bogomila Welsh Ovcharov. Editor. Van Gogh in Perspective

The Artists in Perspective Series. H. W. Janson General Editor.

Prentice-Hall Inc. Englewood Cliffs New Jersey. 1974.

144. Bogomila Welsh Ovcharov. Vincent van Gogh . His Paris Period.

1886-1888.

Pb Editions Victorine . Utrecht - Den Haag. 1976.

145. John Rewald. Editor. Paul Cézanne. Letters. Fpb 1941. 2nd 1944. 3rd

1946. 4th 1976 (revised and enlarged). Bruno Cassirer Oxford.

146. Cyril Barrett. Op Art. Studio Vista London Pb 1970.

Bibliography, section 4. Philosophic and Theosophic sources used in direct connection with this study.

1. Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers. Het nieuwe wereldbeeld. (The new image of the world). C. A. J. van Dishoek, Bussum 1915.
2. Dr M. H. J. Schoenmaekers. Beginselen der beeldende wiskunde. (The principles of plastic mathematics). C. A. J. van Dishoek Bussum 1916.
3. Edouard Shure. The Great Initiates. Vol 1 and 2. Tr Fred Rothwell. William Rider and Son 1912.
4. Madam<sup>2</sup> H. P. Blavatsky. Isis Unveiled. Vol 1 and 2. Theosophical Publishing House, London and Benares 1910.
5. Madam<sup>e</sup> H. P. Blavatsky. The Secret Doctrine. Vol 1 and 2. Theosophical Publishing House London 1893.
6. Baruch Spinoza. Ethics and De Intellectus Emendatone. Tr A Boyle Intro T. S. Gregory. Everymans. No 481. Dent and Sons Ltd 1959.
7. Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason. Tr Norman Kemp Smith. Macmillan Press 1929, second impression 1933, rp 1973.
8. Charles Taylor. Hegel. Cambridge University Press 1975.
9. Tons Brunes. The Secrets of Ancient Geometry. Vo, 1 and 2. Rhodos Copenhagen 1967.
10. Rudolf Steiner. Art in the Light of mystery wisdom. Tr Johanna Collins. Rudolf Steiner Press 1935, rp 1970.
11. Erwin Panofsky. Idea : a concept in art theory. Tr J. J. S. Peake. Fpb in 1924. second ed 1960 Rp Icon Editions Harper Row 1968.
12. Plato The Republic. Tr H. D. P. Lee. Penguin Books Fpb 1955. Rp 1968.
13. Plato. Timaeus and Critias. Tr Desmond Lee. Penguin Books Fpb 1965, rp 1971.
14. Plato. Philebus. Tr R. Hackforth. Cambridge University Press. Fpb 1945. Rp 1972.
15. Edward Caird. Hegel. William Blackwood and Son MCM1.
16. Mary Lutyens. The Second Krishnamurti Reader. Penguin Books 1970.
17. Rudolf Steiner. Colour. Tr John Salter. Rudolf Steiner Press 1971.
18. K. R. Popper. The Open Society and its enemies. Vol 1 and 2 Routledge & Kegan Paul. Fpb 1945, 5th edition revised 1966, rp 1969. rp 1973.



19. Bertrand Russell. History of Western Philosophy.  
George Allen Unwin. Ltd London Fpb 1946, rp 7th impression 1974.
20. C. W. Leadbetter. The Chakras. Theosophical Publishing House.  
Pb 1927.
21. C. W. Leadbetter. Man visible and invisible. Theosophical Publishing  
House. Pb 1902.
22. Annie Besant and C. W. Leadbetter. Thought Forms.  
Theosophical Publishing house. Pb 1901.
23. R. G. Collingwood. Speculum Mentis or the map of knowledge.  
Oxford University Press. 1924.
24. Mabel Collins. Licht op het pad , en karma. Uitgave van de NV Theosof  
Amsterdam 1918. Holtzman Mondrian Archive.
25. Alcyone (Krishnamurti). Aan de voeten van den meester. Theosophical  
Publishing Amsterdam 1913. Holtzman Mondrian Archive.
26. Rudolf Steiner. Mystiek en Esoteriek. (Microkosmos en makrokosmos).  
Delivered as a lecture 5 March 1908 Den Haag, Holtzman Mondrian  
Archive.
27. Rudolf Steiner. Het Leven van der mersch. Volgens de geheime  
wetenschap. Delivered as a lecture 10 March 1908 Ibid.
28. Rudolf Steiner. Theosofie, Goethe en Hegel. Lecture delivered  
Amsterdam March 6 1908 . Ibid.
29. Rudolf Steiner. De inwijding de Rozenkruisers. Lecture delivered in  
Den Haag 5 March 1908. Ibid.
30. Rudolf Steiner. De Christelijke Inwijding. Lecture delivered Hilversum  
4 March 1908. Ibid.
31. Rudolf Steiner. Over Rozenkruisers-Esoteriek. En de ontwikkeling van  
den Kosmos. Lecture delivered in Nijmegen 10 March 1908. Ibid.
32. Rudolf Steiner. Het Esoterische leven . Lecture delivered in Rotterdam  
on 8 March 1908. Ibid.
33. Rudolf Steiner. Astraalwereld en Devachan. Lecture delivered in  
Amsterdam 8 March 1908. Ibid
34. Rudolf Steiner. Occultism en Esoteriek. Lecture delivered in Den Haag  
6 March 1908. Ibid.
35. Rudolf Steiner. Esoterische en Christendom. Lecture delivered in  
Amsterdam 7 March 1908. Ibid
36. Dr William Howard Hay. The Medical Millennium. Pb Pittsburgh  
Health Club, 1933. Holtzman Mondrian Archive

Bibliography: section 5. Sources used as a background to this study,  
to establish a foundation and a general context.

1. Carl Gustave Jung. Man and his Symbols. Aldous 1964.
2. A. Stor. Jung. Fontana Modern Masters. William Collins and Sons Co Ltd  
1973.
3. Bryan Magee. Popper. Fontana Modern Masters, Collins and Sons Co Ltd.  
1973.
4. Richard Wollheim. Freud. Fontana Modern Masters. Collins and Sons Co Ltd.  
1971.
5. A. J. Ayer. Russell. Fontana Modern Masters. Collins and Sons Co Ltd.  
1972.
6. C. E. M. Joad. Introduction to Modern Philosophy. First Edition 1924, rp  
1958, 8th impression.
7. S. Korner. Kant. A Pelican Book. Fpb 1955, rp 1960.
8. Susanne. K. Langer. Philosophical Sketches. Fpb John Hopkins Press 1962.  
Rpb Mentor, New American Library 1964.
9. Susanne. K. Langer. Philosophy in a New Key: a study in the symbolism  
of rite and reason. Harvard University Press 1942. Rpb Mentor Books.  
New American Library 1964.
10. Susanne . K. Langer. Feeling and Form.
11. Karl R. Popper. The Logic of Scientific Discovery. Fpb Logik der  
Forschung , Vienna 1934. Tr assistance Dr Julius Freed and Lan Freed.  
Fpb in English 1959. 6th revised 1972. Pb Hutchinson London.
12. K. R. Popper. The poverty of Historicism. Fpb 1957, Routledge & Kegan Paul.  
1961. 4th rp 1972.
13. K. R. Popper. Objective Knowledge: an evolutionary approach.  
Oxford University Press. Fpb 1972, rp 1973.
14. K. R. Popper. Conjectures and refutations. Routledge & Kegan Paul.  
Fpb in 1963, 4th edition 1972.
15. E. Gombrich. Art and Illusion. Phaidon 1972.
16. Charlotte Douglas. Birth of a Royal Infant: Malevich Victory over the Sun.  
Art in America: April 1974, pp 46-58.
17. Diane Waldman. Kasimir Malevich: the supremacy of pure feeling.  
Arts Magazine: Dec 1973, pp 24-29.



18. Donald Judd. Malevich:Independent Form , colour and surface.

Art in America. March/ April 1974.

Rp in Donald Judd :complete writings 1959 - 75. pp 211-215.

Pb by The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design and  
New York University Press 1975.

19 Bruce Kurtz. Abstraction and Actuality. Arts Magazine Dec 1973

pp 30 -34.

20. L. E. J. Brouwer. Consciousness, philosophy and mathematics.

Data. Edited by A. Hill Faber and Faber Ltd London 1968, pp 12-21.

21. Theosophical Publishing House Reprint. The Key to Theosophy.

22. Charles Biederman. Art as the evolution of visual knowledge.

Red Wing Minesota.

23. Otto en Adya van Rees . Leven en Werk. tot 1934. Catalogue Haags

Gemeente Museum 1975. Compiled by Herbert Henkels.

Contents volume two.

Pp 1-8. Titles of illustrations.

9. Map of the Netherlands showing important geographic locations  
in Mondrian's early years as an artist.

10. Graph number one.

11. Graph number two.

12-93. Illustrations.

94-109. List of diagrams and notes.

110-147. Diagrams.



Titles of the illustrations of works used in this study, the titles are given in chronological order. In the instance of a work used for comparative reasons, the name of the artist is given as a prefix to the title of the work. All dimensions are in centimetres.

1. Church at Zouteland. 1909-10 oil, 90. 7-62. 2
2. Composition with yellow lines, 1933, oil, 80-80.
3. Farm at Nistlerode. 1904, watercolour 44. 5-63.
4. Victory Boogie Woogie, 1943-44 Oil 126-126.
5. Broadway Boogie Woogie, 1942-43. oil 127-127.
6. Trafalgar Square, 1939-43, oil 142 5-120.
7. Place de la Concorde, 1938-43, oil, 90. 6-91. 25.
8. Composition with blue and yellow 1935. oil, 73-69 8
9. Composition in white, red and yellow 1938, oil, 79. 5-61 3.
10. Composition in red and black, 1936, oil 58. 1-55. 6.
11. Composition with red, yellow and blue, 1935-42, oil. 96. 25-50
12. Composition 2, 1922, oil, 55. 7-53 6.
13. Lozenge with grey lines, 1918, oil, dia 121.
14. New York, 1941-42 oil, 95. 2-92.
15. Composition with colour planes on white ground A 1917 oil,  
49 3-43. 1.
16. Composition with colour planes on white ground B, 1917 oil  
50-44.
17. New York City 1. 1941-42, oil, 119. 3 114. 2.
18. Pier and ocean, 1914, charcoal 51-63.
19. Evolution, 1911, oil, 178-84 1.
20. Woods with stream, 1888, charcoal and crayon 62-48
21. Gillis van Coninxloo, Forest 1598, oil
22. Dead hare, 1891, oil, 80-51.
23. Jan Weenix, Hunting trophy, 1704 oil 109. 37-90.
24. Ships in the moonlight, 1890 oil, 30 5-40. 6
25. Dusk, 1890, oil 26. 6-43 1.
26. Haysheaves 1891, oil, 29-39.

27. Matthuis Maris, The Bride, 1895, oil, 101. 3-95.
28. Jan Vermeer View of Delft, 1662, oil
29. Josef Israels, Dredgers, 1901 wash, 40-55.
30. Josef Israels, Going home mother and son twilight, 1890, oil.  
44 x 59.
31. Willem Maris , White cow upon a ditch bank, 1896. water colour  
and crayon, 42-53.
32. Jacob Maris, View of a truncated mill, 1871-78, oil 126. 5-94.
33. Still life with jug and onions, 1892, oil 65-72.
34. Still life with herrings, 1893. oil 66. 5-75. 5.
35. Pieter Claesz. Still life, 1636, oil.
36. August Allebé. The old attendant, 1870. oil on panel 61. 7-33. 7
37. Girl writing, 1890 black crayon, 57-44. 5.
- 38 Standing nude, 1901, oil 30-42
39. Landscape with ditch, 1895, aquarelle . 44-66.
40. Adolphe. J T. Monticelli, Chemin de montagne, circa 1868, oil  
98-130.
41. Farmhouse with clothes line, 1895? oil 31. 5-37. 5.
42. Forest , 1898-1900, aquarelle and gouache, 45. 5-57.
43. Woman with child in front of farmhouse, 1898-1900, oil,  
33-22.
44. Woman in front of farmhouse, 1898-1900, oil, 33. 5-22. 5.
45. Horse at waters edge, 1898-1900 charcoal, 17-11.
46. Barge, 1898-1900, aquarelle and crayon, 33-55.
47. Barge, 1898-99 pencil and conte, 11. 5-32.
- 48 Canal Bridge, 1898, water colour. (a) 40. 5-62.
49. Canal bridge, 1898, charcoal.
50. Reformed church at Winterswijk, 1898, etching, 33. 5-25 3.
51. Jan Toorop, sketch, 1892-97, charcoal. 28. 5-19. 5
52. J. H. Weissenbruch, Woman and wash circa 1890, gouache and charcoal  
33. 1-47. 2
53. Portrait of a girl with flowers, 1900-01, oil 52. 5-43. 1.
54. Spring Idyll 1900 oil, 75-64.
55. Chrysanthemum, 1900? aquarelle, 28. 5-24. 5.
56. Wax candle factory, 1900-01, oil, 35-48.
57. Wax candle factory, 1899, crayon, 19-27.



58. House on the Gein, 1900, water colour, 46-57.
59. House on the Gein, 1900, oil, 41. 8-31.
60. Pollard Willows, 1902-04, charcoal, 60-40.
61. Pollard Willows, 1903, oil, 25. 3-29. 8.
62. V. N. de la Pena Diaz. Tempete, circa 1870, oil, 26-42.
63. Charles F. Daubigny. La Lune Argentée, 1875, oil, 65-109.
64. Barns at Nistlerode. 1904, oil, A 33-43, B 31. 5-41. 5.
65. Sketch, Farm at Nistlerode, 1904 pencil.
66. Sketch , Barn at Nistlerode, 1904, pencil.
67. Cows in a shed, 1904, charcoal and crayon, 33-45.
68. Farmyard with cattle and willows, 1904, crayon, 46. 5-58.
69. The white calf, 1904-05, aquarelle, 44. 5-58. 5.
70. Mill at Uden, 1904, aquarelle, 77. 5-55. 5.
71. Chrysanthemum, 1901, watercolour, 38. 3-19. 3.
72. Study of cows, 1904-06, oil, 40-48. 2.
73. Farm at Duivendrecht, 1905-06, watercolour, 50-65. 5
74. Farm at Duivendrecht, 1905, charcoal and estompe, 46. 3-60.
75. Farm at Duivendrecht, 1906, pencil, 12-22.
76. Farm at Duivendrecht, 1906, oil, 46-59.
77. Farm at Duivendrecht, 1906-07, crayon and gouache, 43-76.
78. Farm at Duivendrecht, 1916, oil, 85. 5-108. 5.
79. Evening landscape with cows, 1907, oil, 31. 5-44.
80. Trees along the Gein. 1905-06, oil, 31-35.
81. Farm with trees and water, 1906, crayon and conte crayon,  
47. 5-61. 5.
82. Along the Amstel, 1906, aquarelle, 31-41.
83. House among trees and river, 1906, charcoal, 34-49.
84. Windmill, 1905-06, oil, 64-79.
85. Woods at Oele, 1906, crayon, 11-67.
86. Pond near Saasveld, 1906-07, 102-180. 5.
87. Charles F. Daubigny. Plage de Villerville a Marée, 1874, oil  
86-146.
88. Charles F. Daubigny, Villerville sur - mer, 1872, oil, 100-200.
89. Summer night, 1906-07, oil, 71-110. 5.
90. Solitary tree, 1907? crayon. 14-19.
91. Solitary tree in a landscape, 1907, oil, 40-65.

92. Great Landscape, 1907, oil, 75-120.
93. Red Cloud, 1907, oil, 64-75.
94. Trees along the Gein: moonrise, 1907, charcoal, 63-75.
95. Trees along the Gein : moonrise, 1907, oil, 79-92: 5.
96. Trees along the Gein, 1907-08, 69-112.
97. Landscape near Oele, 1907, crayon, 29. 5-32.
98. Tree, 1908, oil, 50-75. 5.
99. Printemps, 1908, crayon, 69. 5-46.
100. Devotion, 1908, oil, 94-61.
101. Passiebloom, 1908? aquarelle, 72. 5-47. 5.
102. Chrysanthemum, 1908, gouache, 94-37.
103. Three self portraits, 1908, charcoal, 79. 5-53, 30-24. 5 , 30-25. 5.
104. Woods near Oele. 1908, oil, 128-158.
105. Jan Toorop. The Sphinx, 1892-97, oil, 126-135.
106. Jan Toorop. The arrest, 1885, oil, 145-201.
107. Jan Toorop. Bulb field. 1885, oil, 65-77.
108. Jan Toorop. The woodcutter, 1905, oil, 100-91.
109. Jan Toorop, Dunes and sea at Zoutelande, 1907, oil, 47. 5-61. 5.
110. Georges Seurat. Une baignade Asnieres. 1883-84, oil 201-445.
111. Georges Seurat. La Parade de Cirque, 1887-88, oil, 100-150.
112. Vincent van Gogh. The Sower, 1888, oil, 32. 5-40. 6.
113. Paul Cézanne. Montagne Sainte -Victorie 1904-06 oil, 64-80.
114. Jan Sluyters. Moonlight, Laren , 1911, oil 50. 5-71 . 5
115. Dunelandscape, 1911, oil, 141-239.
116. Nude, 1908 or 1911, crayon, 86-42.
117. Haystacks, nos 1, 2 and 3, 1908, oil. 34. 2-43. 8.
118. Windmill in sunlight, 1908, oil, 114-87.
119. Windmill in sunlight, 1908, oil, 43. 8-34. 3.
120. Windmill in sunlight, 1908, charcoal.
121. Tree, 1908, crayon, (a), 31. 25-48. 25.
122. Tree, 1908-09, crayon, (b), 31-44.
123. Tree, 1908, tempera, (c). 75. 5-99. 5.
124. Blue Tree, 1908, tempera, (d) 30. 6-36. 25. Not illustrated.
125. Blue Tree, 1908, tempera, (e), 55. 2-74. 3.
126. Blue Tree, 1908, oil, (f), 63. 5-71. 7.
127. Red Tree, 1908, oil, (g), 70-99.



128. Evening Landscape. 1908? oil 64-93.
129. Lighthouse near Westkapelle. 1908, oil, 71-52.
130. Lighthouse near Westkapelle. 1909-10, oil 39-29. 5.
131. Lighthouse near Westkapelle, 1909, ink crayon and gouache, 30-24. 5.
132. Lighthouse near Westkapelle, 1909-10, oil 45-35. 5.
133. Lighthouse near Westkapelle, 1909-10, oil 135-75.
134. Church at Domburg. 1909, oil, 76-65. 5.
135. Church at Domburg, 1909, oil, 36-36.
136. Church at Domburg 1909, ink 41. 5--28.
137. Chrysanthemum. 1909, aquarelle, 72. 5-38. 5.
138. Arum Lily, 1909, oil, 46-42.
139. Arum Lily 1909, charcoal, 44-31.
140. Arum Lilies. 1910, oil, 50-33. 5.
141. Sunflower (dying), 1908, watercolour, 94. 6-36. 8.
142. Sunflower (upright), 1908, mixed media, 90-39.
143. Chrysanthemum (life cycle), 1908, watercolour, oil. charcoal,  
78. 5-46, 94-37, 49-41. 5.
144. Sea and Sky, 1908-09, oil, 10-14.
145. Dunes 1, 1909, oil , 30-40.
146. Dunes 2 , 1909, oil, 37. 5-46. 5.
147. Dunes 3. 1909, oil, 29. 5-39.
148. The sea after sunset. 1909, oil, 41-76.
149. Seascape, 1909, oil, 34. 5-50. 5.
150. The sea after sunset. 1909, oil, 62. 5-74. 5.
151. Beach at Domburg. 1909, oil, 33. 5-43.
152. Dune 4. 1909-10, oil, 33-46.
153. Dune 5. 1909-10, oil, 65. 5-96.
154. Dune 6. 1909-11, oil, 134-195.
155. Church at Domburg, 1910-11, oil, 114-75.
156. Mill at Domburg, 1909, oil, 76. 5-63. 5.
157. Tigerlilies, 1909, -10, crayon and charcoal, 35-44.
158. Red Mill, 1910-11, oil, 150-86.
159. Still life with ginger pot 1, 1911-12, oil 65. 5-75.
160. Still life with ginger pot 2, 1911-12, oil, 120-100.
161. Still life with apples and a plate, 1901, oil, 37-55.

162. Jan Sluyters. Child's bedroom, 1910, oil, 107. 5-84.
163. Pablo Picasso. Les Demoiselles d'Avignon, 1907, oil, 241. 25-231. 25.
164. Paul Cézanne. Baigneuses, 1900-05, oil, 205-250.
165. George Braque. Grand Nu, 1908, oil, 139. 3-100.
166. Paul Cézanne. Still life with basket(detail) 1888-90, oil.
167. Sketch, dunes at Domburg, 1911, 44. 6-67, A , B , C .
168. Le Fauconnier. Le Abundance, 1910, oil, 313. 75-192. 5.
169. Fernand Léger. Fumes sur les toits, 1910, oil, 65. 6-55.
170. Landscape with trees, 1911-12, oil, 120-100.
171. Landscape, 1911-12, oil, 63-78.
172. Pablo Picasso. Portrait of Monsieur Kahnweiler, 1910, oil, 98. 1-70. 6.
173. Loedwijk Schelfhout. Road in Provence :, 1912, oil, 66-89.
174. Figure Study. 1911-12 oil, 115-88.
175. Nude. 1911-12, oil, 140-98.
176. Pablo Picasso. Seated woman, 1909, oil, 91. 25-60. 6.
177. Oval Composition, 1913, charcoal, 85-70.
178. Sketch, tree, 1912, pencil.
179. Flowering appletree, 1912, oil, 78-100.
180. Grey Tree. 1912, oil, 78. 5-107. 5.
181. Tree 2, crayon, 56. 5-84. 5.
182. Composition in Oval, 1914, oil, 113-84. 5.
183. Composition , colour planes , 1917, oil, 48-61.
184. Composition , tree 1 912, oil, 81-62.
185. Composition , tree 2 , 1912, oil, 98-65.
186. Oval Composition, tree, 1913 , oil, 94-78.
187. Composition 1 , tree, 1913, oil, 85. 5-75.
188. Compostion 3, tree, 1913, oil, 95-80.
189. Wood, 1912, crayon 73-63.
190. Tree study 1, 1912, crayon, 65-89
191. Tree study 2 , 1913, charcoal, 65. 5-87. 5.
192. Fernand Léger. Contrastes des formes. 1913, oil, 97. 5-123. 1.
193. Leo Gestel. Forest, 1911, oil. 113. 5-87 . 5.
194. Leo Gestel. Woman with flowers, 1913, oil, 115. 5-100. 5.
195. Composition with lines; black and white, 1917, oil, 108-108.
196. Church at Domburg, 1914, ink, 63-50.
197. Composition in oval with bright colours, 1913, oil, 105. 3-77. 8.



198. Tableau no 3, oval composition, 1914, oil, 140-101.
199. Composition, 1916, oil, 118. 5-75.
200. Notre Dame des Champs, church façade, 1914 pencil, 111-114. 3.
201. Church Façade, 1914, ink, 62. 2-37, (Domburg).
202. Church Façade, 1914 (Domburg). A pencil, B, C, D ink.
203. Composition no 8, 1914, oil, 94. 5-55. 5.
204. Composition based on a diamond shape, 1914-16, pencil, 50. 1-44. 7.
205. The sea, oil, 1912, 80. 5-90.
206. Sketch, the sea, 1912, pencil, 10-15. 5.
207. Sketch , the sea, A and B, 1912, pencil 11-16.
208. The sea , 1914, charcoal, 47-60.
209. The sea, 1914, charcoal, 93. 75-126. 25.
210. Pier and Ocean, 1914, charcoal and india ink, 54. 3-65.
211. Pier and Ocean, 1914, charcoal, 51-63.
212. Pier and Ocean, 1914, coloured crayon and gouache, 85. 25-110. 5.
213. Pier and Ocean, 1915, oil, 83. 75-106. 25.
214. Ocean , charcoal 1914. .
215. Sketch , Pier, 1912-14, 11-16, pencil. .
216. Sketch , Pier, 1912-14, pencil, 11-16.
217. Sketch, Pier, 1912-14, pencil, 11-16.
218. Sketch , Pier and Ocean, 1914, pencil, 11-16.
219. Composition , plus and minus, 1916, oil and pencil on canvas, 124. 4-75. 5.
220. Bart van der Leck. Composition, 1918, oil, 56-46.
221. Bart van der Leck. Horseman, 1918, oil, 94-40.
222. Bart van der Leck. Geometric Composition, 1917, oil, 95-102.
223. Bart van der Leck. Mine Triptych, 1916, oil, 113-56.
224. Composition with colour planes, 1917, oil, 48-61. 5. .
225. Composition with colour planes and grey contours, 1918, oil, 49-60. 5.
226. Untitled drawing, circa 1918, conte crayon on canvas, 29. 9-49. 7.
227. Composition checkerboard with bright colours, 1919, oil, 86-106.
228. Composition in diamond, 1919, oil, diagonal 84.
229. Composition checkerboard with dark colours, 1919, oil, 84. 1-102. 2.
230. Composition with red, yellow , blue and black; 1921, oil, 59. 5-59. 5.
231. Composition 1 , with red , yellow and blue, 1921, oil, 103-100.
232. Composition with Great Blue Plane, 1921, oil, 60. 3-49. 8.
233. Composition with blue, 1926, oil, 59. 8-59. 8.

234. Lozenge composition in a square with red, yellow and blue, 1925,  
oil, 101. 5-101. 5.

235. Theo van Doesburg. Counter Composition XV1, 1925, oil, 100-180.

236. Composition with blue and red, 1927, oil, 38. 1-34. 3.

237. Composition B with grey and yellow, 1932, oil, 50-50.

238. Study for Tableau 1, 1921, charcoal, 88. 2-60. 3.



The diagrams and titles of the works from which their constructions were abstracted, with notes on the properties that the diagrams depict.

Diagram no1 'Landscape with ditch', mid 1880's, scale 1 to 4.

At the very inception of his career as an artist Mondrian can be seen to have been concerned with the structural components of his works. This work like many others of the same period displays a planear structuralism that whilst tentative at this very early stage, was still a part of Mondrian's preoccupation.

Diagram no2 'Forest landscape' 1898 to 1900, scale 1 to 4.

This very beautiful work demonstrates an even greater degree of structural and planear control than the previous work. The triangular planes shown in the diagram were used to depict illusory space these were balanced by the two 'repoussoir', rectangular elements of the tree trunks in the foreground.

Diagram no3 'Wax candle factory', 1900 to 01, scale 1 to 4.

In this painting Mondrian introduced an important perception the reflection of the factory in the water. This construct forms an important part in Mondrian's development of formal devices as will be shown.

Diagram no4 'Pollard willows,' 1902 to 04, scale 1 to 4.

The simple means of compositional construction that Mondrian employed in the construction of what appears to be a view of a cluttered area of woodland are here shown. The leaning willow he pictorially countered through two simple movements in the opposite direction.

Diagram no5 'Tempest'. Virgile Narcisse de la Pena Diaz.

Scale 1 to 3. This painting through the impact of its paint handling seems to be very complex in its compositional structure. But it was in fact based upon the division of the canvas into two horizontal rectangles of the same width. In addition Diaz placed the two other structural elements in the position indicated in the diagram. It is known that Mondrian visited and greatly admired the collection of French 19th century and Barbizon School paintings in the Mesdag Museum The Hague where this painting forms a part of that collection.

Diagram no6 'La Lune argenteë' Charles Daubigny 1875.

Scale 1 to 6. Again in the work of Daubigny (in his paintings which form a part of the Mesdag Museum collection). The same compositional constructional simplicity can be perceived. The developments of landscape painting that took place in Dutch painting during the 17th century became in the paintings of the Barbizon School very refined.



Diagram no7 'Farm at Nistlerode'1904, scale 1 to 3.

The process of abstraction employed to consider the compositional construction of this important work was that of layered abstraction. The first of these illustrates the three horizontal divisions of the pictorial surface. The second illustrates the structure of the planear division that Mondrian employed to build up the perceptual concept of this view.

Diagram no8 'Cows in shed',1904, scale 1 to 4.

This study is one of a series of this same subject carried out whilst Mondrian was working in the area around Uden in Brabant. This particular work illustrates how Mondrian's growing preoccupation and experimentation with rectangular planes and pictorial division was developing.

Diagram no9 'Farmyard with cattle and willows',1904, scale 1 to 4.

Although the actual proportions of this work do not follow any very carefully controled system the overall effect created by the four vertical and angular topped planes, balanced by the three horizontal planes ,must have been carefully organised by Mondrian to give emphasis to the peaceful bucolic scene.

Diagram no10'The white steer calf',1904 to 05,scale 1 to 4.

In composition this work is similar to that considered in relation to diagram no9. It is though more complex in it's structural divisions. But again the structure was important to the realisation of the content with which Mondrian was concerned.

Diagram noll a and b'Farm with trees and water',1906,  
scale 1 to 4.

This is one of the first works in which the oval form,, that which became a predominant device during Mondrian's Cubist period,can be clearly seen.It's resolution comes in this instance more from perception than from some conceptual construct.

Diagram no12' Along the Amstel',1906,scale 1 to 4.

After his return to Amsterdam from Brabant Mondrian used as a source for his paintings views along the Amstel and Gein rivers. This work and it's diagram illustrates his continuing experimentation with reflection.

In this instance the formal device of the oval became a truncated oval again.An important precedent for and experiment which predates his use of the same form during his cubist period.



Diagram no13 'House among trees along river', 1906, scale 1 to 4.

Although there is in this work a certain amount of illusory space, the main structure of this study was intended to explore a very simple and refined composition made up of twelve rectangular divisions.

Diagram no14 'Plage de Villerville a Maree Basse', 1874.

Charles Daubigny. Scale 1 to 8.

Simplicity of composition was not a quality that was unique to Mondrian, as intimated earlier the Barbizon School of painters had pursued this end in their work as this diagram illustrates.

Diagram no 15 'Villerville sur mer', 1872. Charles Daubigny.

Scale 1 to 10. This diagram reiterates the compositional simplicity of Daubigny's work. Mondrian in visiting the Mesdag Museum must have seen these works and realized their significance to the Hague School of landscape painters and consequently to his own development.

Diagram no16 'Trees on the Gein at moonrise', 1907 to 08,

scale 1 to 8. Again this work emphasises the compositional decisions that Mondrian made, being the manifold of perceptual constructs and his own inner urge towards ordered simple compositional solutions.

Diagram no17 'Chrysanthemum', 1908, scale 1 to 8.

The diagonal and upward thrust of the flower Mondrian balanced with the rigid quality that is imparted by the narrow rectangular strip on the left hand side of the work. But the proportions of the overall rectangle used for this work emphasises the upward movement.

Diagram no18 'Passiebloem', (Passion Flower), 1908? (1901 or 02).

The work itself offers a feeling of static repose the measurements on the diagram emphasise the care which Mondrian used in gaining this quality through symmetry.



Diagram no19 'Still life with apples and plate', 1901,  
scale 1 to 4.7.

A still life within the compositional traditions of Dutch still life painting, wherein the main planes were set parallel to the picture plane.

Diagram no20 'Still life with ginger pot 1', 1911 to 12, scale  
1 to 6.5.

Under the planes and lines which depict the abstraction of objects can be seen the tentative beginnings of the grid structure upon which Mondrian was to concentrate in his Cubist and post Cubist. paintings.

Diagram no21 Grand Nu, Georges Braque' 1908, Scale 1 to 7.5.

The lines on this diagram define the edges of the planes out of which Braque constructed the composition of this painting

Diagram no22 'Still life with ginger pot 2', 1911 to 12,  
scale 1 to 6.8.

The process of layered abstraction which was used in considering Farm at Nistlerode, was again used for this painting. In this way all the compositional parts of the painting were revealed; with the addition of the two lower layers which are projective extensions of information gained from the upper three layers.

Diagram no23 'Montagne Sainte-Victorie', Paul Cézanne,  
1904 to 06. Scale 1 to 3.2.

Although Cézanne himself did not use lines to define edges he did say that edges were formed where planes met planes. This painting built up of faceted paint forming multiple planes was obviously important in directing latter artists attention towards the edges of forms and planes which they defined with lines. This diagram shows the edges that can be abstracted from Cézanne's painting thereby showing the rhythm of line or edge that he created across the picture surface.

Diagram no24 'Portrait of Monsieur Kahnweiler', Pablo Picasso,  
1910. Scale 1 to 5.1.

Layered abstraction was employed here again for the same reasons as it was used in the instance of the two preceeding Mondrian paintings.

Diagram no25 'Landscape with trees and Landscape', 1911 to 12,  
scale 1 to 15.

These four layered abstractions depict the underlying structural grids upon which Mondrian constructed the abstracted elements of the perceived objects.

Diagram no26 'Flowering apple tree', 1912, scale 1 to 7.5.

Again two abstracted layers depicting the essential structure of the composition and the lines that form Mondrian's rhythmic vision of the object. In his post cubist period he was to find that an equivalent sense of rhythm could be created with the first grid alone.



Diagram no27'Sea after sunset' 1909, and speculative model.

These two diagrams are to demonstrate the possible sort of conceptual model that Mondrian might have constructed:

in response to his perception of the sea, the horizon which it formed and the physical extensions of the beaches on the west coast of the Netherlands, especially in the Province of Zeeland. It is a diagram that abstractly describes Mondrian's depiction of the sea after sunset, but in addition it includes the possible vertical extension of the perception. This idea of the vertical extension Mondrian did not depict perceptibly in his painting, it can only be inferred from the painting and from other works of the same and earlier periods. The result of his evolving consciousness was a symbolic form, one that was consistent with the synthetic conceptual construct. It was a synthetic concept that embodied the mundane egg symbolism of Theosophic teaching as well as Mondrian's developing knowledge of the nature of Universal forms. The ovoid form was therefore a construct based for Mondrian in the manifold of apriori decisions coupled with judgements made from empirical experience. The ovoid form played a central role in Dr Schoenmaekers book 'Het Nieuwe Wereldbeeld', as the model of the receptacle of the Universe.

Therefore points A-B represent the optimum points of vision from the viewers position C. Whilst point D represents the optimum point of vision from the viewers position to the horizon formed by the sea at 90 degrees to his position.

Points AD formed by the line AD, and the point DB formed by the line DB are representative of the optimum points of vision caused by the viewer swinging his vision to either the right or left so that it establishes points A or B, which also coincide with the horizon formed by the sea. Thus points DA and DB, are formed. Point E represents the optimum point of the vertical, or near vertical vision. This point can be determined by extending a line upwards from point D and by joining this line to points A and B, by so doing an ellipse can be drawn. Points X and Y are shown to represent points of visual impossibility, for the viewer must swing through an arc even though his view of the horizon rests upon a point formed only by the sea, for the length of his optimum vision remains constant in such an uninterrupted view.



Diagram no28 'Untitled and unknown drawing: circa 1918:'

A set of seven layered diagrams carried out to extract all the information perceptible on the drawing into layers that could be used in the analysis of other works. Layers 1 to 6 are abstractions from the drawing, layer seven is a composite being an abstraction and a projective extension of the grid that forms the square to the edges of the rectangular canvas upon which it was drawn.

Diagram no29 'Checkerboard, with light and dark colours', 1919.

Layer no1 of this analytic diagram is an abstraction of the basic grid from 'untitled', drawing.

Layer no2 is a diagram of the basic grid of that drawing extended to form the primary grid for the construction of the checkerboard grid of both these paintings.

Layer no3 is a visualization of the numerically determined proportionate change required for the construction of the rectangular grid forms, these are in an exact proportionate relationship to the overall rectangle upon which they were constructed as well as being in a precise proportionate ratio to all the squares of 'untitled', drawing.

Layer no5 is a diagram of the final resolved grid, being in vertical and horizontal axes sixteen rectangles.

Diagram no30 'Lozenge with grey lines', 1918, scale 1 to 5.2.

Layers nos 1 and 2 are the basic grid or the parts of the grid upon which this painting was constructed.

The units that were then constructed upon this grid are then shown in layers nos 3 to 8.

Layer no 1 relates to layer no 3 of the 'untitled', drawing. In the instance of this painting Mondrian rotated it through 45 degrees to form a lozenge.

Layer no 2 relates to layer no 7 of the 'untitled'; drawing.

In this instance the 45 degree extension possibilities have been rotated through 45 degrees, thereby forming a 90 degree axial grid over the first part of the basic grid, the rotated first layer.

Diagram no31 'Composition in diamond' 1919, scale 1 to 3.6.

In the instance of this painting the relationship of the basic grid upon which this painting was constructed, to 'untitled', drawing is, it would appear, in a different order to those used by Mondrian for the construction of 'Lozenge with grey lines'. The basic compositional grid of this painting was constructed, as layer 1 demonstrates, by placing the extended grid of 'untitled', drawing, layer no 7, on the canvas first.

Upon that was placed a grid based on 'untitled', drawing layer 3. Both layers Mondrian rotated through 45 degrees. Their placement in the instance of this painting being the reverse of that employed as the basic structure of 'Lozenge with grey lines'.

Over these two basic grids was placed a third grid, one that was an amalgum of 'untitled', drawing layers 1 and 2. Thereby a more complex primary grid was formed than that employed in



Layers nos 4 and 5 of this diagram are abstractions of Mondrian's intuitive interaction with this determinate primary grid.

Diagram no32 'Composition with red ,yellow ,blue and black', 1921. , scale 1 to 5.

These four diagrams demonstrate the perceivable structure of this painting and the possible geometric or plastic considerations that might have motivated it's compositional resolution. It also demonstrates the manner in which it's largest constructed square acts as the primary proportionate factor in the final composition. The primary squares proportionate ratio to the basic square of the canvas is 4 to 1. whilst the small square directly below the prime square is in a ratio to that square of 4 to 1 and is therefore in a ratio of 8 to 1 with the basic square. The square, that can be seen drawn in the top left hand corner, of the right hand diagramatic square; demarcated by broken lines; is in an exact whole number ratio to the two preceeding squares. Being in the first instance 2 to 1 and in the second 1 to 2, that is with the small square. The formation of this intermediate square in terms of it's proportionate relationship to the other two squares, can be achieved through the application of what Tons Brunes has cited as the system of 'Ancient Egyptian Geometry'. The position of the primary square has quite obviously been carefully placed, for if it's position is considered through the application of the principles of this form of geometry, it can be seen, as shown in the bottom left hand diagram, that it's position can be found exactly through the regressive application of this system.

The bottom right hand diagram is to illustrate the importance of the primary square's position. For it can be seen that within the implications of the perceivable structure that there exists a cross, the asymmetrical position of the primary square breaks the rigid symmetry of the cross, whilst still maintaining an exact proportionate relationship with the areas of the cross and the basic square.

In fact these four diagrams viewed together illustrate the quality of 'exactness' but utter simplicity of the system, whether based on the ancient system or not, that Mondrian might have used for the construction of this painting.

Diagram no33 'Composition with two lines', 1931, scale 1 to 6.

Using the same system of 'ancient geometry' as that used to consider 'Composition 1921', it can be seen that this diagram demonstrates the same general principles of geometric division as those which were found in the earlier work. The two lines have been positioned in such a way that if their logical extensions are added they form a square.

In the instance of this painting Mondrian once again achieved an asymmetrical composition by working plastically with geometric forms that are known historically for their symmetry. In achieving this asymmetrical property Mondrian still maintained a whole number order of proportionate ratios of all the parts.

The diamond shape in which this painting was constructed is in fact a square rotated through 45 degrees. The square



formed by the two lines is in the ratio of 4 to 1 with the outer square and thus 2 to 1 with the diamond, which is in this instance proportionately determinable through the application of the principles of 'ancient geometry'.

The extension of the horizontal and the vertical lines on the canvas towards the left, demarcated by broken lines, shows the extra space or area that Mondrian incorporated into the left hand triangle and also into the triangle at the foot of the diamond. The two remaining triangles, those at the right hand point of the diamond and at its top have an area that is a deduction from the area indicated.

Diagram no34 'Composition with yellow lines', 1933, scale 1 to 6.

The position and the proportions of the yellow lines on this canvas are of extreme importance and thereby exactitude. For their widths have an exact proportionate relationship to the diamond within which they are contained and thereby to the external square shown in the diagram; in the same manner as can be seen in 'composition with two lines'. In both instances they extend beyond the edges of the square construction contained in the diamond. In the instance of the third line, the broadest one on the right hand side, the yellow area of the line extends both inside and outside the square. In the instance of the fourth line the yellow area Mondrian placed on the inside of the square.

The square formed by the yellow lines in the instance of this painting is in the ratio of 1 to 1 with the diamond. But if the areas of these two forms are added together they amount to the same area as that shown in the diagram as the outer square, from which all of their parts can be derived.

Diagram no35 'Broadway Boogie Woogie',1942 to 43,scale 1 to 7.

This painting in comparison with the two preceding paintings is a very complex painting, and it is unlikely that at this stage of his career that Mondrian would have paid much attention to the careful use of a predetermined system of geometrical proportionate order. For he had found as early as 1918 that the system could be both predeterminate in the restrictive sense, as well as being determinate in what he understood as 'determinate' in his plastic sense. But it is worth noting that the structure of this painting can once again be shown to relate to the proportionate system of 'ancient Egyptian geometry'. The two layered diagrams together give an indication of this relationship. But as the drawings for this painting show Mondrian worked out the compositional structure of this painting both intuitively and empirically. By working in this way, he developed over a period of many years a very simple system of personalised 'plastic', mathematics which was at the same time universal. In addition it could as has been shown, be found to bear a close relationship to the speculative and metaphysical geometric system of the Ancient Egyptians, whilst extending that predeterminate system into the realms of 'unity in duality'.